

WILD WEST

WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc OF WESTERN LIFE

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S VICTORY; OR, THE ROAD AGENTS LAST HOLD UP.

AND OTHER STORIES BY JAMES D. SCOUT



"Drop!" exclaimed Wild to the scout, and as quick as a flash both fell to the ground. The daring boy then plunged headforemost between the legs of the captain and upset him with a crash. Then they made a break for the place they came through on entering.



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YOUNG WILD WEST'S VICTORY

—OR—

THE ROAD AGENTS LAST HOLD-UP

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

ROB RUNNER AND HIS BAND.

The stage-coach that ran between Weston and Spondulicks left the former little town one hot day in summer with only three passengers in it.

These were three men who had come out to the Black Hills to make their fortunes and had not succeeded.

But they had saved up sufficient gold dust to amount to a thousand dollars between them, and they were bound home, hoping to have considerable of it left when they got there.

In addition to these passengers the stage-coach carried the mail, and in the bags were a number of letters containing money that the miners were sending home to their folks.

The driver and the man who went along as a sort of guard were on top of the outfit and both were taking it rather easy.

It was a warm day and the horses were not urged along any faster than a jog trot, and the passengers were getting anxious about getting into Spondulicks, so they could get a good night's rest and connect with the Overland route for the nearest town that had a railroad.

The rather rickety rig was lumbering along about half-way between the two towns, and the driver was dozing on in the box, when suddenly about a dozen horsemen appeared in the road ahead of him and a voice called out:

"Halt!"

The horsemen wore masks, and each of them had a revolver leveled at the driver and the guard on the top of the vehicle.

It was wonderful to see how quickly the driver obeyed that command. There is nothing any more persuasive than a pistol in the hands of a desperate-looking man.

"Hands up!" came the order from the foremost horseman, and this, too, was obeyed.

But the three passengers had not been taken into consideration by the masked riders, and one of them, who was a plucky sort of a fellow, began firing his revolver at them.

He had fired just three shots, wounding two of the horses and narrowly missing the leader of the band, when one of the masked men sent a rifle ball crashing into his brain.

This was sufficient to make the other two give in, and they at once called out that they would surrender and do as they were told.

"You are talking with a little sense, gentlemen; but I am afraid it is too late. I always make it a point to have every passenger killed, if there is one or more of them who do any shooting. You will just hand over your weapons now, and then allow yourselves to be relieved of what you have got."

At a signal from the speaker two of the men dismounted and stepped up to the door of the stage-coach and opened it.

The man who had been shot was lying half on the seat and half on the floor of the vehicle between the two, and they acted as though they were willing to get out.

But this they were not allowed to do.

They handed over their weapons with the best grace possible, and then held their hands above their heads while the two villains went through their pockets.

This was soon done and then they turned their attention to the dead man.

What they took from their victims they promptly turned over to the man who was evidently the captain.

"I suppose you are going to let us go now," one of the passengers ventured to say.

"Not yet, but in a few minutes you can go. I want to tell you who I am first."

"Well, who are you?" spoke up the other man.

"You may have heard of Rob Runner, the gambler?"

"Yes: he used to hang around Weston a great deal."

"Well, have you ever heard of Captain Rob Runner, the road agent?"

"No."

"Well, I happen to be both of them."

"I can't say that I am pleased to meet you," ventured one of the men.

"Nor I, either," added his companion.

"You are trying to get humorous, I see," said the captain of the road agents. "That is something I never tolerate when I am on business of this kind. Get serious, now, and say your prayers, for you have only thirty seconds to live!"

The two unlucky men turned deathly pale at this.

Their eyes met, as though they were asking each other what to do.

"I am going to shoot you both when I count three," said Captain Rob Runner in an icy tone of voice.

The men looked around for an avenue of escape, but there was none.

The road agents had surrounded the stage-coach and their weapons bristled on every hand.

"One!" said the cold-blooded villain.

He was seated astride his horse and had the reins in his teeth, while in either hand was a revolver.

The muzzles covered the breasts of the two passengers and they were so close to them that they could hardly miss.

"Two!"

The helpless men trembled slightly, for the tone of voice of the outlaw captain implied that he really intended to make good his word.

"Have mercy on us!" one pleaded. "We have—"

"Three!"

The last word had scarcely been uttered when two reports sounded as one, almost, and the passengers tumbled over backward.

One was killed instantly and the other was badly wounded.

But another shot from the cruel scoundrel caused this waning light to flicker and go out.

It is sickening to record such doings, but it becomes our duty to chronicle the events as they took place.

In those days road agents were as thick as fleas in that section, and the majority of them were devoid of heart and conscience.

Rob Runner seemed to enjoy what he was doing thoroughly.

He looked at the driver and the guard on the top of the coach, who sat there with their hands up as they had placed them when the command was given.

"Have you got anything about you?" he asked.

"Nothin' worth mentionin'," replied the driver.

"Well, get down off there, anyhow. Being that this thing has gone so far, we might as well do it up brown. It will be the first hold-up of the kind that ever took place on the road between Weston and Spondulicks."

The two men obeyed.

"You have got ther drop on us," said the driver; "an' we ain't fools enough to not do as you say."

"That's right, pardner," nodded the guard, who was an old man of sixty.

"Well, it won't make any difference," laughed the road agent captain. "Boys, just relieve them of their shooting irons and then tie their hands behind them."

In spite of the protests made by the men, this was done in short order.

"Now, one of you get up there and get the driver's whip."

An agile man in the crowd soon had the whip.

Rob Runner then ordered the men who were holding the horses by the bits to let go and get out of the way.

"Get up!" he cried, and then he plied the whip into both leaders at once and caught the others as they darted ahead.

The animals had been more or less frightened, anyhow, and this treatment served to start them ahead at breakneck speed.

They did not mind the hot July afternoon now, but thundered along the road leading to Spondulicks, real runaways now, for they found that there was no one holding the lines.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Rob Runner. "That will be a surprise to folks in Spondulicks when they see three dead men come riding in. What a joke!"

His men joined in the laugh, as though it was the funniest thing they had seen in a long time.

But the poor fellows who stood there with their hands tied behind them did not feel that way.

They began to feel as though their end was close at hand.

"See here," spoke up the driver in a pleading tone, "I've got an old mother in Spondulicks, who depends on me to make her livin'. Jest let us go, won't yer? We'll walk inter town, an' we won't tell where this hold-up took place. We kin say that it was a couple of miles from here, or anywhere you say."

This seemed to tickle Rob Runner immensely and he laughed boisterously this time.

"I like to hear you talk that way," he said. "But I would give ten years of my life if it was Young Wild West who was saying it. You are a friend of his, I'll wager. And I have sworn vengeance on any one who is a friend to that fellow."

The driver's eyes flashed.

His manner changed, and he now became defiant and reckless.

"When you say that I am a friend to Young Wild West you speak the truth!" he retorted in a ringing voice. "Every honest man who has ever set eyes on Young Wild West is a friend to him. He couldn't help to be. You say you'd give ten years of your life if it was him who was pleadin' to you to be let live. Well, you cowardly villain! I'd be willing to die right here in my tracks if I could only see Young Wild West an' his pards, Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart an' Jack Robedee, comin' up ther road! I could die happy then, for I know that some of you would go under in no time, an' ther rest of yer would turn tail to an' run like whipped curs. When you mention the name of Young Wild West, jest remember that I say that he will be the death of you before many weeks, Rob Runner! That's all I've got to say, so go on, now, an' do your worst!"

The portion of the road agent's face that was visible below the mask he wore twitched when he heard these ringing words.

"Take them both to the nearest chasm, or hole, that you can find!" he exclaimed, with something like a hiss, to his lieutenant. "I was going to torture them, but a drop of a couple of hundred feet to the sharp rocks below will be a pleasant death for them to die! The people in Spondulicks and Weston can wonder what became of them, and they can keep on wondering."

"Captain, there is a deep chasm right over to the left about two or three hundred yards from here," spoke up one of the members, who had joined the band but lately.

His name was Buck Wood, and he was a rank enemy of Young Wild West, whom he had tried to murder on more than one occasion.

"All right," replied Rob Runner. "Buck, you take charge of the business, then. We will all go over to see them take their last drop."

The old man who had been acting as the guard on top of the stage-coach winced slightly.

But he did not open his mouth. Evidently he was aware of the sort of men he was dealing with.

He was one of those hardy old fellows who had fought his way through all sorts of perils and had reached a ripe age, with no one but himself to look out for.

Many times he had been near to death, and it is just possible that he had become so used to it that he was not afraid to die.

But, at any rate, he would not give the villains the satisfaction of hearing him beg for his life.

The ruffian called Buck Wood now stepped forward and took the old man by the arm.

Another of the masked men seized the driver.

The two then started off on foot, and the rest dismounted and led the horses away from the roadside, tying them to the trees that grew there in abundance.

Rob Runner removed his mask and walked close to the men he had condemned to die.

There was a sinister smile on his evil face as he went along, and he began talking in a joking manner.

But the stoical mood of the old guard must have given the driver the cue to remain silent, for he did not open his mouth after the defiant words he had spoken.

The prisoners walked along mechanically, it seemed, for their limbs moved as though there was no life in them.

"There's the chasin, cap!" cried Buck Wood, pointing to a narrow fissure a short distance ahead of them.

The captain ran ahead and peered downward.

It seemed as though he was peering down an odd-shaped well.

Many feet below he could see the sharp points of riven rocks protruding upward and outward in almost every direction.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "When I give the word, run them over!"

"All right, cap!" answered Buck Wood, motioning for some more of the men to help him.

"Are you all ready?"

"Yes!"

"Now, then, you fellow, who is a friend to Young Wild West, just take your last look at the sky! And as you go down to your death, remember that it won't be long before Young Wild West will follow you! Let them go, Buck!"

There was a scuffling noise on the brink of the abyss, two long-drawn cries of despair, a rattle of loosened dirt and pebbles, and then the road agents turned from the spot.

Cold-blooded Rob Runner had kept his word.

If the faces of the men could have been seen just then it is possible that they would have showed up very pale; for as villainous as they were, it is not likely that they really enjoyed throwing those two helpless men to their death.

At a word from the captain they went back to their horses, and then mounting, they repaired to their secret quarters, where a double allowance of whisky was served to steady their nerves.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG WILD WEST RESOLVES TO EXTERMINATE THE ROAD AGENTS.

Young Wild West, the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, was just saddling his handsome sorrel horse, Spitfire, when Cheyenne Charlie, a famous scout and close friend of his, came along with some important news.

"The stage-coach was held up and robbed yesterday afternoon!" he said.

"What?"

"That is right," the scout answered. "The three passengers who left with it were found dead inside, and the driver and guard were missing when the outfit reached Spondulicks."

Young Wild West was the treasurer of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Co., and Cheyenne Charlie was one of his three partners on a quadruple claim that had panned out handsomely.

The two other partners were Jim Dart and Jack Robedee.

Dart was a handsome, athletic boy of about Wild's age, and Robedee was a rather short, chunky fellow a few years older.

The four were great friends and had been in many a hard fight together. If it wasn't Indians it was bad whites, and they had resolved to make a clean town out of Weston, which had been named in honor of Young Wild West.

"So the scoundrels have started in at their business again, have they?" said Young Wild West. "I did think, since we had not heard from them in several weeks, that they had made off for other parts."

"Somethin' has got to be done," retorted Charlie. "We'll have to organize a vigilance committee an' exterminate ther road agents."

"If we could locate the place where they hang out we could do it in short order."

"Let's take a walk over to ther post-office an' see what they think about it over there."

"All right."

Young Wild West called out to Jim Dart and Jack Robedee. The four were partners who had worked a quadruple claim successfully. They walked toward the post-office.

There was quite a gathering in front of the neat little building that had been erected for the purpose, and old Sam Murdock, who had been appointed postmaster, was telling them all about it.

Inside the office a young girl was busy sorting over some letters, papers and packages.

She was Young Wild West's girl, pretty Arietta Murdock.

She was the postmistress, not because she had wanted the job to earn her living, but because she was adapted to such business, and there seemed to be no other young girls in the town who were exactly fitted for it.

Arietta came out when she saw Young Wild West approaching.

"It is too bad," said she. "There were a whole lot of registered letters that went with the mail last evening. It seems as though the road agents must have got wind of it somehow."

"They have got one of their men right here in Weston; of that I am satisfied. I have thought so all along," replied Young Wild West.

"We must make it our business to find out who it is, then," spoke up Jim.

"I've got my suspicions of who it are," said Jack.

"So have I," nodded Wild.

Robedee placed his mouth to Wild's ear.

"You mean Jake Jumper, ther miner who never seems to work very hard, don't you?" he whispered.

"Yes, he's the one."

"Well, we had better keep a close eye on him."

"We will."

Shortly after nine the ill-fated stage-coach drove in with a man from Spondulicks driving.

There were no passengers, save the dead bodies of the men who had been killed aboard, but two old frontiersmen sat on the top, rifles in hand.

The mail was delivered, and then preparations were made for the triple funeral of the luckless passengers who had been shot down by the road agents.

Nothing had been learned of the missing driver and guard, so it was thought that they must have been slaughtered and thrown off the road behind rocks or bushes.

Young Wild West was not a little worried over the hold-up, and came to the conclusion that the road agents must be broken up, and that as soon as possible.

The town of Weston was on the boom and such things were bound to give a set-back to it.

Just before it began to grow dark that evening Wild called Cheyenne Charlie aside and said:

"What do you say if we go out on a hunt for the road agents?"

"A good idea," replied the scout.

"Well, go and get your horse, and we'll start out, without letting any one know about it."

"That's the best way. If it got known that we were going on such an errand, whoever it is that's in league with ther scoundrels might ride to their headquarters an' let 'em know that we was after 'em."

"And in that case, we might get more than we wanted."

"That's it. Well, I'll be ready in ten minutes."

"Good enough!"

When the ten minutes had passed Cheyenne Charlie was there.

Wild mounted Spitfire, and then, just as darkness set in, they left the town.

They chose the mountain road which branched off about eight miles from Weston.

One fork led to Spondulicks, and the other went straight on to the prairies beyond.

They felt that Rob Runner, a gambler, and Buck Wood, a cowboy, were in some way connected with the road agents.

It was near the fork in the road where they had last met the two villains, and that was why Wild was heading for there now.

The two brave riders cantered along at an easy gait, on the alert for the least noise that might signify danger.

When within a mile of the forks they brought their horses down to a walk.

There was no moon and it was as dark as a pocket.

Presently Young Wild West began to sniff the air suspiciously.

"I smell smoke from burning wood, Charlie," said he in a low voice.

"By jingo! I do, too," was the reply.

"There is a campfire around here somewhere."

"Something like that, I guess."

What little wind there was came from the east and it was from that direction that the odor came.

After a few more sniffs they started up the road.

The smoke could be smelled plainer all the time.

But suddenly they lost it altogether.

"We are past it," Wild whispered.

His companion nodded.

They walked their steeds back a few steps.

Then they could smell it very plainly again.

"It comes from over there," and Wild motioned to the left side of the rough mountain road.

"We'll go back a couple of hundred yards and tie our horses, and then hunt for the place it comes from on foot."

"That's it."

They rode back a little way, and then dismounting, searched about for a suitable place to tie the animals.

They were not long in finding one, as there were lots of places in that vicinity where there were niches and inlets suitable for that purpose.

The sorrel stallion was a horse that was not used to being tied close to another, so Wild was particular in fastening him to the trunk of a blasted pine, while Charlie tethered his a few feet away to a jutting piece of rock.

They could smell the smoke plainly from this point, and knowing that the fire was off the road in that direction, they felt about for a means of getting up on the rocky eminence that ran along right there.

It was too dark to see their way with any degree, but luck must have been with them, for almost the first thing they did was to find a place where they could clamber upward.

Wild led the way as agile as a cat, and his companion followed more slowly.

After clambering upward for about ten feet the brave boy reached a smooth incline that was not too smooth to ascend.

"Come on, Charlie," he whispered. "We are getting nearer that smoke, or I am no judge of the matter."

"That's right," was the reply. "I kin smell coffee, too, can't you, now?"

"Yes, when you speak of it; come to think, I can."

"Funny place for a camp up here, ain't it?"

"That's what I have been thinking."

"Well, we mustn't make ther least bit of noise, now, an' we've got to be ready to shoot at ther least notice."

"That's right."

Having come to this understanding, they pushed ahead again, and gradually they went up the ascent.

A couple of minutes more and they found themselves on the top of a ridge that was not over a dozen feet wide.

But that was not all!

There was a long crack in the center of this, and through

it not only came the smell of smoke and coffee, but a faint light as well!

The next minute the two were peering down into the stable of the road agents' headquarters.

The horses belonging to the outlaw band could be seen quite plainly, as a sufficient light came from somewhere, but just where our two friends could not make out.

They leaned over the opening and listened.

Much to their satisfaction, they could hear the sound of voices.

"We have found them, sure enough," whispered Wild. "But how they get in and out is a puzzle to me. There is nothing but a steep bluff back here, and I know of no way that they could get in this cave beneath us from the road."

"We'll have to find out, that's all," was the reply.

Young Wild West thought for a moment and then came to the conclusion that it would not be advisable to go any further that night.

"We will mark the place where we climbed up here, so we will be sure of finding it," he said. "Then to-morrow night we will come back disguised and try to get in the cave with or without the consent of the road agents."

"That's right. We kin rig ourselves up as a couple of Sioux or Pawnees. I kin rattle off considerable of their lingo, an' I've got all ther fixin's to do it with over home."

This seemed to be a good idea, so after taking another look into the stable below they crawled back and made their way slowly down the incline.

In a few minutes they were on the mountain road again, and after making a landmark by placing three stones in a line close to a boulder, they made for their horses.

"I think we have done first-rate for our first try at them," observed Wild as they walked their horses till they were well out of the hearing of the villains in the cave.

"We've done remarkable, I should say!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie.

When the two got back to Weston they found that their absence had only been noticed by their immediate friends.

"What's up?" asked Jim, as he and Wild were getting ready to turn in that night in their neat little cottage that had been built on the quadruple claim.

"Oh, Charlie and I have been out on a tour of investigation," was the reply.

"Well, did you learn anything?"

"A great deal."

"Well, I learned something while you were away."

"You did?"

"Yes. I learned that Rob Runner, the gambler, is a frequent visitor to our town. He comes in disguise."

"The dickens, you say!"

"It is a fact. I saw him less than an hour ago. I don't believe he has left yet."

"How did you find this out?"

"By watching Jake Jumper."

"You don't mean to say that the bushy-whiskered man who plays poker occasionally with Jake is Runner, do you?"

"That is just exactly what I do mean," Jim answered. "Jack and I went over to Brown's Gazoo shortly after you and Charlie disappeared to-night, and we found a very stiff game of poker in progress there. The man with the bushy whiskers and Jumper were fleecing a couple of tenderfeet out of a thousand or two, and that reminded me of the experience of Cheyenne Charlie some time ago. Jack and I watched the gamblers pretty closely, and we both soon came to the conclusion that it was Runner, by his voice."

"Well, when I come to think of it, I believe you are right."

"You said you learned a great deal to-night. What was it that you learned?"

"Charlie and I discovered the headquarters of the road agents," answered Wild.

"What?"

"It's a fact."

Jim could scarcely believe his senses when Wild related what he and Cheyenne Charlie had discovered that night.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "I guess it won't be very long now before we'll have the villains on the run."

"No. I have made up my mind to break up the gang, and it is going to be done, as sure as my name is Young Wild West!"

The two talked the matter over for nearly an hour before they went to sleep, and when they got up the next morning they went to their work with the thoughts of breaking up the gang of road agents uppermost in their minds.

It set in to rain shortly after sunrise, so the majority of the miners did not go to work.

This was the sort of a day that a professional gambler liked.

He could generally make a pretty good haul on a day like this, as the men were bound to spend their idle time in gambling and drinking.

It was about ten o'clock when Young Wild West and Jim strolled down to Brown's Gazoo.

Almost the first persons they saw there were Jake Jumper and the man with the bushy whiskers.

CHAPTER III.

THE POKER GAME AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

Young Wild West looked sharply at the man with the bushy whiskers as he walked into the gambling saloon.

Cheyenne Charlie was keeping a good eye on Jake Jumper.

The scout and the miner were not on speaking terms, and had not been since a poker game which had resulted in Charlie being fleeced.

Wild knew all the tricks of a professional gambler, though he never played unless he had some other object in view than the mere winning of money.

He was not a believer in gambling of any kind.

None of his friends had ever seen him play, and what was Charlie's surprise when Wild said in a voice loud enough for every one to hear:

"Gentlemen, it is hardly a fit day to do any work, so what do you say if we have a game of draw poker, just to pass an hour or two away?"

No one else offered to take a hand, so the four went into spoke up.

"I wouldn't mind taking a hand," he said.

"An' I don't mind takin' a hand," spoke up the bearded fellow in a gruff voice that sounded very much as though he was trying to disguise it.

Cheyenne Charlie caught a glance from Wild, and he, too, signified his willingness to play.

No one else offered to take a hand, so the four went into the back room, and finding a table that was not in use, sat down.

A man brought them the cards and the game started up.

At first the stakes were rather low and both the man with the whiskers and Jumper were losing.

Then Wild suggested that they go a little higher.

This seemed to be exactly what they wanted, though they appeared to be a trifle suspicious of the young mine owner.

They did not know whether he was playing the game to simply pass the time, or whether he had a purpose in view.

But he seemed to be so interested in it that after a while they came to the conclusion that he was there just for the sake of having a game.

Wild was playing after the manner of an innocent greenhorn.

When he had a good hand he would run the betting up high, and when he failed to draw anything more than a pair he would invariably drop out.

Pretty soon, by mutual consent, the ante rose to five dollars, with a limit of fifty.

That made it a pretty stiff game, but that was nothing to some of the games that were played in those days.

Even at Weston bets as high as a thousand dollars had often been made.

This was what the miners called "a nice, quiet little game of draw."

The man with the bushy whiskers was called "Ned" by Jumper, and as the game progressed, Wild got to calling him that, too.

At the end of an hour Ned was about two hundred dollars out, Wild and Charlie the winners, and Jumper about even.

Then things began to grow interesting.

It was Ned's deal, and when Wild picked up his hand he found himself the possessor of three kings and a pair of jacks. He sat on the right of the dealer, with Charlie next to him.

That made the miner have the first say, and he promptly made it fifty to draw cards.

Charlie did not have a pair to go in on, but a look from his young friend made him go in, and so all four stayed in.

Jumper took two cards, Charlie four, and then it came Wild's turn.

The boy was sure that the cards had been stacked, and

with the full-house the dealer had given him, he was expected to stand pat.

But he concluded to fool him a little bit, so he took two cards.

Ned looked at him sharply as he passed them over, and Wild made sure that they did not come from the bottom of the pack.

The dealer hesitated for a moment and then took two cards himself.

Wild picked up his two.

He had discarded a pair of jacks and now had a pair of aces instead.

He was confident that he knew what the man was up to now.

Jumper looked as though he wanted instructions from some one for a moment, but finally bet the limit on his hand.

When it came to the scout he raised it fifty, and then Young Wild West met him and went fifty better.

The man with the bushy whiskers coolly raised it another fifty, Jumper lifted it again, and Charlie followed suit.

Wild was satisfied that he held the best hand, since he had spoiled the dealer's little game.

The two aces he got in the draw were intended to go to the dealer, but he didn't get them.

"You are altogether too stiff for me," said Ned, when Wild raised it another fifty. "I haven't got a pair, so I'll drop out."

Jake Jumper followed suit, showing only too well that he had been playing with him for the purpose of beating our two friends.

Cheyenne Charlie called Wild, who promptly showed his hand.

"Didn't you say that you didn't have a pair?" he asked, as he raked in the pot.

"Yes," was the reply from Ned.

"You dealt the cards, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And you haven't got a pair?"

"No."

"I'll bet you a thousand dollars you have."

"What do you know about my hand?" the man asked, half rising to his feet.

"I know that you have got a pair."

"Well, I know I haven't."

"Why don't you bet me, then?"

"See here, young fellow, are you trying to start a row?"

"Oh, no," replied Wild. "But you are mistaken when you say you haven't got a pair in that hand you just threw down. You have a pair of aces."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I happen to have a way of telling. You would have had four of them if I had stood pat, as you supposed I would. You are a pretty smart gambler—almost as smart as Rob Runner."

The man, who was now pretty mad, placed his hand on the butt of his revolver, and Wild did the same.

Charlie, just turn those five cards over and see if I am not right when I say that there are a pair of aces in it."

The scout did so, and there, sure enough, were the two aces.

"This is what you call a case of the biter getting bit," said Young Wild West, looking straight at the man's eyes. "Now, Mister Ned, as you call yourself, just take your hand off the handle of your gun, will you?"

As the request was complied with, Wild reached forward as quick as a flash and seized the bushy whiskers.

He gave a quick pull and they came off, revealing the face of Rob Runner!

Jake Jumper made a move to draw his revolver on Young Wild West, but Cheyenne Charlie had him covered in an instant.

"No yer don't!" he exclaimed. "We hold ther winning hand!"

"Just take charge of this man, some one," said Wild, calmly. "I rather think he has been wanted around here for some time."

Two or three men immediately stepped forward and relieved the villain of his weapons and then bound his hands behind his back.

He did not offer to make a fight, as the muzzle of Young Wild West's revolver was staring him straight in the eyes all the time.

"Now, gentlemen, you had better serve Mr. Jake Jumper in the same way," went on the daring young mine owner.

"I have reason to believe that he is not exactly what he tries to make us believe he is."

Such words from Young Wild West were sufficient to make the miners act on what he said.

Though it seemed entirely unexpected from him, Jumper submitted like a lamb.

"I don't know what you are doin' this for," he said. "But I reckon you'll find out what a big mistake you've made afore very long."

"And I reckon we won't!" exclaimed Wild. "I accuse you of being the man who notified the road agents of the valuable contents of the mail bags, so they might hold up the stagecoach and reap a rich harvest!"

Jumper turned a shade paler at the accusation, but stoutly denied it.

"I am an honest man," he said, "an' no one kin prove that I ain't!"

"I will prove what you are before you are twenty-four hours older," retorted Wild.

"Without much trouble, too," added Cheyenne Charlie.

"Well, who would have thought that it was Rob Runner who has been comin' around here for the past week?" remarked the keeper of the place. "I bet Jake knew it was him all ther time, an' that makes it look bad for Jake. Boys, I'm of ther opinion that Young Wild West knows exactly what he's talkin' about every time he talks."

"Right yer are!" chorused the crowd.

"Lock them up hard and fast, boys," observed Wild, as he started to leave the place. "I'll bring you evidence in a few hours that will hang them both. I know just what I am talking about this time, too."

A strong lockup had been built in Weston when the improvements began, and without any further parley the two prisoners were marched off to it and placed in charge of the man who acted both as judge and jailer.

The story was told to him and he seemed to be much pleased.

"Well, we have been wantin' Runner a long time, an' now we've got him," the jailer said. "I'll take care of 'em both all right enough, see if I don't."

But this jailer, though a pretty fair sort of a man, was not rich in this world's goods.

He had failed in almost everything he undertook, and when he came to Weston and saw others getting rich all around him, while he was almost starving, he was glad enough to accept the position of judge and jailer.

His knowledge of the law as it used to be expounded in "Old Missouri" was his main recommendation for the position.

This man had a bad failing. He was very fond of whisky.

He also liked to handle money, which was nothing more than human.

The miners who brought the two prisoners to him waited until they were locked in the strong room of the jail, and then took their departure to talk over the occurrence.

The jailer took his seat in front of the door of the room and lighted his pipe.

Presently he heard the voice of one of the prisoners calling to him.

He paid no attention to it at first, but when he heard something said about whisky a little later he got up.

"What did you say?" he called out.

"I said I had a bottle full of corn whisky in my pocket that them fellers didn't take away from me," came the answer from Jake Jumper.

"Well, what good is it to yer? Yer can't drink it with your hands tied."

"I know that. Can't you untie our hands, so we kin drink it?"

"I guess not."

"It is good stuff."

"Well, s'pose it is, what of it?"

"You are a judge of good liquor, ain't you?"

"Somewhat."

"Come in an' taste this, then."

The jailer hesitated for a moment, and then, going to the front door, to make sure that no one was coming, he came back and fitted the key in the lock.

It seemed that he never felt the need of a drink so bad as he did just then.

His hand turned the key slowly and the door went open. With a guilty step the jailer entered.

"It's right in my coat pocket," said Jake. "They didn't take anything from us but our guns an' knives."

The next minute the fellow had the bottle in his hand.

He took a long pull at it and then breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

"That is good stuff," he admitted. "Do you fellers want a drink?"

"Yes," answered Rob Runner. "Hold the bottle to my lips."

His request was complied with, and then Jumper got a swig.

The bottle was still nearly half full, and placing it to his lips, the jailer drained it to the last drop.

When rum's in wit's out.

It took almost immediate effect on him and he stared at the prisoners with an idiotic grin.

"Just put your hand in my pocket and pull out the bag you'll find there," said Rob Runner.

"Which pocket?"

"The right trousers pocket."

"All right, old man!" and the request was promptly complied with.

"What will I do with this bag?" asked the jailer.

"You may keep it if you want to. There's just a thousand dollars' worth of gold dust in that bag. Do you want it?"

"Do I want it?" and the drunken jailer laughed and undertook to perform a few steps of a jig.

"Yes. Do you want it? Remember, I am talking business now."

"Of course I'd like to have a thousand dollars," replied the man. "What do you mean, anyhow?"

"I mean just this: Untie our hands and feet and that bag of gold dust is yours!"

The jailer opened the bag and fingered some of the glittering stuff inside it.

Then he hesitated.

But not for long.

Into his pocket went the bag and out came his knife.

"No, no!" exclaimed the gambler. "That won't do. You must not cut us loose; untie us, so it will appear that we got free without the help of any one."

"Oh! I (hic) understand what you (hic) mean, now," and the now thoroughly intoxicated man started in to untie the cords about the wrists of the gambler.

In his present condition the jailer could not work very fast, but Runner showed that he possessed great patience.

After something like five minutes the villain's hands were free.

Then while the drunken jailer started in on Jumper, he untied his feet.

"That feels better," he observed, still keeping his seat on the floor.

But as soon as his companion was free he got upon his feet.

Then something happened that the jailer had not counted on.

Before he knew it he was seized and thrown to the floor, a hand being pressed tightly over his mouth to prevent him from making an outcry.

With the cords that had bound them the two villains tied him up securely.

They gagged him and then took his weapons and everything he had of value on his person, including the bag of gold dust.

"Good-day!!" exclaimed Rob Runner, as he led the way to the back door of the jail.

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN ROB RUNNER SHOWS WHAT HE IS MADE OF.

"We ought to get out of this scrape nicely now," observed Rob Runner, as he closed and locked the back door of the jail. "It is raining so hard that there ain't many people out, and we can't be seen here from the post-office or the other public places."

"That's right," replied Jake Jumper. "I s'pose I'm done for, as far as stayin' in this town is concerned. I'll have to go to headquarters with you."

"This is bad business all around. Confound that Young Wild West! He ought to have been shot long ago!"

"He's a very hard one to down, young as he is."

"I'll admit that. But I'll fix him yet, see if I don't!"

As they left the shadow of the building they dropped upon their hands and knees and began to crawl for the cover of a grove of stunted pines not far distant.

Luck was with the villains, it seemed, for they got there in safety.

Rob Runner was now perfectly at his ease.

He examined the brace of revolvers he had taken from the jailer, and after satisfying himself that they were properly loaded, handed one of them to Jake.

"We've got a long walk ahead of us," said the miner, as he took the weapon.

"Perhaps we won't walk," was the reply.

"Why? We can't git hold of a couple of horses, kin we?"

"No. It would be dangerous to make the attempt. But by the time we get a little way out on the road the stage for Spondulicks will come along."

"You don't mean to ride in that, do you?"

"Why not?"

"We might git nailed ag'in."

"Oh, I've got a couple of wigs and false beards in my pocket. We'll put them on right now, and it is a pretty sure thing that the driver will not know us."

"You're what I call a wonderful man!" exclaimed Jake, as his companion produced the articles in question.

The miner wore a short mustache only, and when a gray beard, topped off by a wig of the same color, had been put on him, there was a great change in his looks.

Runner adjusted a pair of side whiskers to his face and put on a pair of glasses, and the change in him was enough to deceive the ordinary person.

When they had changed their hats and a portion of their clothing, the disguise was complete.

Keeping well under cover of the trees and hills, they made for the road leading over the mountain.

They had hardly got upon it when the rumbling of wheels came to their ears.

"Ah! Here comes our conveyance!" exclaimed the daring captain of the road agents. "Jake, we are all right now!"

"If they don't find out who we are," was the answer in a rather uneasy tone.

"Nonsense! It is not likely they have heard of our escape yet. Just keep a stiff upper lip and leave it all to me. I'll do the talking."

Presently the stage-coach came in sight.

The two disguised villains halted at the side of the road and waited for it to come up.

The driver seemed surprised to see two travelers bound out of town in the rain, but he came to a halt when they called out to him.

"You are goin' to Spondulicks, ain't you?" asked Runner of the driver.

"Yep! That are jist whar I be bound," was the reply. "Jump in if you're goin' there."

"We ain't goin' there, but we'll ride as far as ther fork of ther road with you. This is a nasty rain, ain't it?"

"Yep," answered the driver, and then the vehicle started.

There were only two passengers besides the escaping villains, and they were a couple of men from the East, who had either made their pile, or had become disgusted with mining, and were starting for home.

Runner thought that they must have considerable money with them, and he began to think of a plan to get it away from them.

There was a man on the top of the stage who acted as a guard, and he and the driver would be about all two would care to tackle in a shooting match, let alone two more.

But the captain of the band had no idea of tackling them just then. His idea was to give the signal for his men to come out as soon as the stage-coach arrived near their quarters.

On rumbled the vehicle and the rain kept steadily falling.

It was anything but a pleasant day to travel.

None of the passengers had anything much to say, and after a while the two disguised men settled back and made out that they were asleep.

When they reached the point where a secret cave was located, both were thoroughly awake. Rob Runner started in to whistle a merry tune, and just as they passed the hidden entrance he let out two shrill blasts as a wind-up to the tune.

There was nothing in this that appeared really strange, but the driver and guard did think it a little peculiar, and when the fork in the road was reached and the two villains got out, they eyed them keenly.

While Rob Runner was settling with the driver for their ride, the sounds of approaching hoofs suddenly came to their ears.

As it was raining hard and the ground was very soft, the noise was not heard until the horses were almost upon them.

Around a bend came a dozen masked riders, and the driver raised his long-lashed whip to ply it into his horses.

But the whip did not descend, for the astonished man sud-

denly found himself looking into the muzzle of Jake Jumper's revolver.

And Captain Rob Runner, gambler, road agent, etc., had got the drop on the guard as easy as rolling off a log.

The masked horsemen dashed up and surrounded the stage in a jiffy.

"Hands up!" came the imperative command from Runner's lieutenant, who was in charge of the road agents.

The two passengers had nothing else to do but to obey, and up went their hands.

"Step out, gentlemen, and be careful how you do it!"

This was said by the disguised Rob Runner.

The two passengers looked at him as though they hardly believed their senses.

But they stepped to the ground, holding up their hands as they did so.

With a bland smile the disguised gambler stepped up and went through them.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said, when he had found over a thousand dollars in money and gold dust. "You are very kind, I assure you."

Then with a mocking laugh he stepped back and tore off his false side whiskers and eyeglasses.

"I want you four gentlemen to know me," he went on in a tone of extreme recklessness. "I am Rob Runner, the boss gambler of this part of the country, and I am also Captain Rob Runner, the boss of the best band of road agents on the face of the earth."

A cheer from the masked horsemen went up as he said this, but their victims remained perfectly silent.

The driver and guard were doing a whole lot of thinking, however.

They were mad at themselves for being so easily duped.

But it was too late now, and they felt that if they got away with whole skins they would be lucky.

The lieutenant now rode up close to the vehicle and demanded all the weapons the four victims had.

They gave them up without a murmur.

"Now I guess they kin go on, can't they, cap?" he observed.

"Yes," was the reply. "We won't do any slaughtering to-day, since they have behaved themselves so nicely. Be off with you in double-quick time, or I may change my mind and fill you full of lead!"

With astonishing quickness the two passengers scrambled into the vehicle; the driver laid the whip on the four horses hitched to it, and away they went at a break-neck speed.

"Hurrah for Captain Rob!" cried the lieutenant of the band, and the men gave a hearty cheer.

"Thank you, boys," was the retort. "I am in great luck to-day, it seems. A few hours ago Jake Jumper and I were in the jug at Weston, with the pleasant prospects of having a noose around the neck of each of us. But a bottle of whisky set us free, and we caught a ride home, and got over a thousand dollars for riding. There's nothing like luck, boys, and it is right with us, and will continue to be."

Again the men broke into a cheer.

Two of them dismounted and insisted that the captain and Jake should ride their horses to the retreat.

It was not very far, but seeing that they really meant it, the pair of scoundrels mounted and rode off with the band, leaving the two obliging ones to make the distance on foot.

The lieutenant was busy whispering to the captain on the way, and the latter appeared to be surprised at something.

The truth of the matter was there was a man in their cave who had been trying to get the majority of the band to decide in with him and elect him captain in place of Runner.

His argument was that the money that was made was not fairly divided; that Runner gave them what he pleased and never made an accounting to them.

He managed to get about half a dozen to take sides with him, but the rest he had approached had been non-committal.

This fellow was one of the strongest and most brutal of the band.

The captain had long regarded him with a certain degree of suspicion, and now since he had been so victorious in all that had taken place that day, he determined to teach the fellow a lesson.

He was all ready for him when the horsemen passed through a secret opening in the rocks and let a canvas fall back in place.

The very first thing that Captain Runner did was to call the roll of the band.

He started in by calling his own name first, and thence from the lieutenant down to the last man to join, who was Buck Wood, the villainous cowboy.

When this was done he arose and said:

"Gentlemen, all are present, save two who dismounted and gave up their horses to Jake and myself. Are all those here loyal and true?"

It appeared that every man answered in the affirmative, but the captain had sharp eyes and ears.

He noticed that Doc Spouter, a man who was working secretly against him, did not open his lips, or even nod his head.

"Doc Spouter!"

The name fairly thundered from Runner's lips.

"What d'ye want?" came the reply in just as loud a voice.

"Are you loyal and true?"

"Yes, to every one who is loyal and true to me."

Both men had their hands on their revolvers now, and the rest of the band looked on with breathless interest.

Just a few were in favor of the man who had dared to beard the lion in his den, but they did not care to make it known just then.

It was evident to all that Doc Spouter was not afraid of the captain.

"Do you mean to insinuate that I have not been loyal and true to my men?" asked Runner.

"If ther shoe fits yer you kin wear it," was the quick reply.

Out came two revolvers, and a double report echoed through the cave.

But, strange to say, neither was hit, and again they fired.

This time Doc Spouter's right arm dropped to his side and his revolver fell to the floor.

Before he could draw his other revolver with his left hand the captain was upon him.

"Hands up, you sneaking viper!" exclaimed the captain. "I am going to make an example of you!"

A word from him and two men seized and held the wounded man, while another bound him securely.

"Into the stable with him," ordered the now thoroughly aroused captain. "He has got to die the death of a traitor!"

Once out into the other cave, a noose was quickly made and placed about the neck of the doomed villain.

A table and a chair were quickly brought out, and in spite of his struggling and cries for mercy, Doc Spouter was placed upon the table in a standing position.

The chair was then placed on the table beside him, and a man appeared carrying a strong piece of wood about six or eight feet in length.

At a command from the captain he climbed upon the chair.

"Now put that stick through and across the rift in the ceiling."

This was done.

The next minute the end of the rope was thrown over and drawn so taut that the doomed man was forced to stand on his tip-toes.

"Make it fast!" was the next order the captain gave, and when this was accomplished he faced the victim and said:

"Doc Spouter, have you anything to say before you dance on the empty air?"

"Nothin', only that you was afraid ter fight it out alone with me. I ain't goin' ter squeal. A man can't die but once! You are goin' ter hang me, an' when yer do it jist bear in mind that when you go it will be in ther same way. I—"

What he was going to add will never be known, for at that instant Rob Runner kicked the table from under him.

As rough and villainous as they were, the majority of the men turned from the horrible sight, but the captain stood there, apparently enjoying it, till the body finally became motionless.

Then he turned and gave the command for all to assemble in the main cave again.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "you have witnessed the punishment of a traitor. I saved that man's life and took him in with me, giving him a chance to make more money than he could otherwise have made, and in return for all this he has tried to down me. If any one thinks that he did not get his just deserts, let him speak out."

No one said a word.

"If there are any of you who are not satisfied with the way I run things, I want you to speak out," went on the captain.

"We are all satisfied," called out Buck Wood. "Ain't we, boys?"

"That we are!" chorused the entire band.

"Then all hands drink to the health of your captain!"

A pailful of whisky was quickly drawn from a cask, and the stuff passed around.

Then men drank from tin cups, each taking a large quantity of the fiery stuff.

Soon they were all in a very merry mood.

The captain ordered another drink all around.

When this had been served one of the men who had been left outside came in.

He saluted the captain and said:

"There are two Sioux Indians outside who held us up and were going to rob us, until we convinced them that we were of the same kind as they. I am satisfied that they are first-class thieves. Shall I blindfold them and bring them in?"

"If you will vouch for them, bring them in," was the reply.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISGUISE IS A FAILURE.

After the rather exciting end of the poker game Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie returned to their headquarters in a roomy building they had erected on their ground.

Jim Dart and Jack Robedee had got there ahead of them.

"I think now would be a good time to pay a visit to the headquarters of the road agents," said Wild. "There is no question of a doubt in my mind that Rob Runner is one of them."

"Certainly he is, an' so is Buck Wood an' Jake Jumper," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "Jest wait till I go over to the house an' git ther things to disguise ourselves, an' then we kin start right out."

It now being settled that they were not to wait till night, the two got themselves ready.

About half an hour later they rode out in the rain, carrying their Indian disguises with them.

"If we don't show up by to-morrow morning you had better come and look for us," said Wild as they started out.

"We may come before that time," answered Jim.

"All right. Come as soon as you like. Probably it will be a good idea for you two fellows to be around close by when we go in the headquarters of the gang."

This answer just suited Jim and Jack to perfection.

They meant to start out a few minutes after their two friends left, and follow them without their knowledge.

Meanwhile Wild and Charlie rode out over the mountain road and kept on their way till they got within probably half a mile of the road agents' retreat.

Then they dismounted and led their horses down into a little ravine where there was a ledge of rock to shelter them.

There was plenty of luxuriant grass for the animals to eat and a brook flowed just a few feet below them.

This spot could not be seen from the road, and here it was that Young Wild West meant to leave the horses while they went to the cave to leave the horses while they went to the cave of the outlaws.

Cheyenne Charlie produced the materials he had brought along to make the disguises, and they at once began to fix themselves up.

It took them quite some time to get things just as they wanted them, but they managed to become satisfied after a while.

They could not have looked more like Indians if they had really been them.

They had not been in their disguise long when they heard the rumble of the stage-coach.

"Let's take a peep and see how many passengers are leaving town on this rainy day," said Wild, and he started to reach a point that was level with the roadway.

Charlie followed him, and they were just in time to see the vehicle as it went by.

"Four passengers," observed Wild. "I wonder who they are?"

"Two of 'em are them fellers who have been actin' homesick so much lately," replied the scout.

"Glad to get away, I suppose. Well, it makes all the difference in the world as to where a person was born. I was born in the Wild West, and there is where I want to live."

"Me, too."

"Things are altogether too tame in the East."

"I s'pose they must be. I was never there to see."

The two daring Westerners made their way back to make sure that it would be safe to leave their horses there, and then they started for the road.

They looked like two badly used Sioux Indians who were looking for some one to do them a good turn.

Just as they reached the spot where they had ascended to the natural roof of the road agents' cave the night before, they heard the clatter of hoofs.

"We had better make ourselves scarce for a while," said Wild.

What he said always went with Cheyenne Charlie.

So they promptly crawled into a niche out of sight.

The next minute they saw a number of masked horsemen and two who were not masked riding up.

Young Wild could scarcely believe his senses.

If it was not Rob Runner he saw he was never more mistaken in his life!

Cheyenne Charlie gave a gasp of astonishment and rubbed his eyes.

"There must be two of 'em!" he exclaimed.

"It seems so," was the reply. "Well, I suppose such a thing could be easily enough."

"But it ain't in this case. If that ain't ther same man we was playin' cards with this mornin' I'll eat my hat!"

"I am of the same opinion. It is Rob Runner, as sure as fate! But how he escaped from the jail and got here I can't imagine."

"That other feller with no mask on is Jake Jumper. He's got false whiskers on, but I kin tell his voice."

"You are right. But wait till they get a little closer, and then we will make sure. They— Great Scott! Where are they going?"

From the position our two friends had taken it looked as though the horsemen were riding into a solid wall of rock.

And before they could change their position to get a better view, the whole of them had disappeared.

"Where in thunder did they go to?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, his face the picture of amazement.

Young Wild West rubbed his eyes.

It was seldom that he ever got fooled.

But he was ready to acknowledge at that moment that he could not explain the sudden disappearance of the horsemen.

While the two stood there talking in whispers over the puzzling occurrence, they noticed two men in the distance who were coming that way on foot.

Like the majority of the horsemen, they had masks on their faces.

"Come on!" exclaimed Wild, suddenly. "There are two of the band. We will hold them up and make them believe that we are in the same line of business as they are."

"That's it."

The two daring fellows kept along in the shadow of the rocks, going at a quick, but noiseless step.

They went right past the hidden entrance to the headquarters of the road agents, but as they saw nothing that looked like an opening of any kind, they did not know it.

They got to a point within a dozen yards of the two men before they were seen by them.

"Ugh! Ugh!" came from the two supposed Indians, as they covered the villains with their rifles.

"Thunder!" ejaculated one of them. "Quit that business, redskins. We are all right. Can't you see we are, by what we have on our faces?"

"Injuns want some money; palefaces must give them some," was the retort. "Injuns hungry; want meat and firewater."

"Well, just lower them guns of yourn, an' we'll try an' fix you up."

"Palefaces hold up hands."

There was no help for it, so the two men obeyed.

And they were right within hailing distance of the band, too!

But they feared to cry out, thinking that the red men would be apt to shoot them if they did.

The "Indians" now advanced rapidly toward them, keeping their guns leveled all the time.

Cheyenne Charlie got off a long string of gibberish that was a mixture of Sioux, Pawnee and English, and then began to go through the pockets of the men, while Young Wild West kept them covered.

"Don't!" protested the most talkative road agent of the two. "Don't rob us. Let's be friends. We are in ther same business. If you are hungry an' want some money, I'll go an' git it for yer."

"Ugh!" was the retort. "Paleface tell heap big lie. He want git chance to kill Injuns; not let him do it."

"Honest, I won't! We both belong to the gang that holds up ther stage-coaches around these parts. Ain't you never heard of us?"

The disguised pair shook their heads.

"Injuns just git here," said Charlie. "Come a long way: lose horses; no money; hungry."

It struck the lawless man who was doing all the talking that the two redmen would make a couple of fine members of the band.

The more he thought over it the more he liked the idea.

"Giles," said he to his companion, "you go in an' tell ther

captain about these fellers. Tell him I think they are all right, an' would be a great help to us in our business."

"Where captain?" asked Wild, playing the part of a very shrewd Sioux to perfection.

"He's inside ther cave," was the answer.

"Ugh! let him come out, then; you no go in."

"If me or my partner don't go in they won't know anything about it. We hadn't ought to stand here in the rain so long, you know."

"Take off masks," observed Wild, and he did so, the villains making no objections.

It would have been no use for them to object, in fact, as their weapons had been taken from them.

It was something like fifteen minutes before our friends would give in to them, and then they only permitted one man to leave.

Wild and Charlie watched him sharply as he made his way along the cliff at the side of the road, but he turned an angle and disappeared before they knew it.

It seemed that they could not find the mysterious entrance.

In a few minutes the outlaw suddenly appeared in the road again, with three men at his back.

They walked straight up to their comrade and the two supposed Indians.

"Do you want to jine our band, redskins?" asked one of them.

"Git plenty money and firewater?" queried Charlie in reply.

"Yes, plenty."

"Ugh! We join paleface band, then."

"Well, you must have yer eyes tied up, so's yer can't see, then."

"Injuns no have eyes tied up."

"Oh, well, you kin go on about yer business, then. I reckon we kin git along well enough without yer."

"No play trick on red men?" questioned Wild, after a pause.

"No, we ain't goin' to play any trick on yer. Ther captain said if yer was all right he'd take yer into our band. But yer must be blindfolded afore yer kin git in our place."

"Ugh! Red men will trust palefaces; go on!"

The next minute their eyes were covered so they could not see a thing.

Then, with a man on either side of them, they were led around in a circle for three or four times, and then taken to the painted canvas that covered the entrance to the underground headquarters.

Through a rather lengthy passage they were conducted, and then brought to a halt in the stable where the body of Doc Spouter was still hanging.

Half a minute later the hoodwinks were taken from their eyes and they found themselves standing in the presence of Captain Rob Runner, the leader of the road agent band.

He gazed at them keenly for a moment, and then with a look that neither of them liked, he said:

"So you are Indians, eh?"

"Give Injuns some firewater," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, not noticing the question.

"Well, I must say that you are queer looking Indians," went on the captain. "Why, the color is coming off around your eyes! You should have used a fast color when you made yourselves up!"

There was a revolver in each of the villain's hands now and the hearts of Wild and Cheyenne Charlie were covered.

Their disguise had been penetrated, owing to the fact that the bandages about their heads to keep them from seeing and the rain had removed some of the stain.

"Drop!" exclaimed Wild to the scout, and as quick as a flash both fell to the ground.

The daring boy then plunged head foremost between the legs of the captain and upset him with a crash.

Then they made a break for the place they had come through on entering, or as near for it as they could judge.

Had they known exactly how to get out they might have stood a chance to do so, but as it was they could not.

"Take them alive! Don't shoot them!" cried Rob Runner, as he quickly got upon his feet.

A short struggle ensued, which resulted in Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie being captured.

Their hazardous venture had turned out disastrously.

Just when they thought they had things down fine their plans were upset.

As their disguise had been perfect, nothing short of the paint coming off could have given them away.

"I don't know exactly who these fellows are," observed Runner; "but I have got an idea. Just take off their fancy headgear, some of you, and wash their faces, so we can see."

This was done in a very short time.

"Aha! Young Wild West, I thought it was you. And your friend, Mr. Cheyenne Charlie, too. Gentlemen, I am more than pleased to meet you here."

"You have got us, it seems," was Wild's bold retort.

"Yes, and I mean to keep you. I shan't let you get away as easy as your friend, the jailer, allowed me to get off this morning. I have made up my mind to keep you both here forever!"

The face of Cheyenne Charlie turned just a shade paler, but the expression of Young Wild West never changed.

"String 'em up, cap, like you did traitor Doc Spouter," said Buck Wood, stepping forward with a gleam of triumph in his eyes as they rested on the two prisoners.

"No—no!" was the quick retort. "That would be altogether too pleasant a death for them. I have decided to drop them into the deep hole!"

As the captain said this the men looked at each other. Some of them shrugged their shoulders, as much as to say that such a fate would be a horrible one indeed.

"You'd better kill 'em first, hadn't you, captain?" ventured one of them.

"Oh, no! They'll die soon enough down there. You ought to know that. I've been a good while getting hold of Young Wild West, and now that I have got him, I want to show him what the revenge of a captain of a band of road agents is like. They both must go into the deep hole alive!"

At a motion from the villain's hand three or four men went over to a corner of the cave and rolled a boulder aside.

A well-like opening was disclosed, from which came a bad odor.

"That is over eighty feet deep," said the captain, "and I don't think they will ever get out of it, alive or dead! Just cut down the body of the traitor and chuck that in first. It will make pleasant company for them."

The body was cut down in a jiffy, and dragging it to the opening, the road agents let it drop into the depths.

The two prisoners heard the dull thud as it struck the bottom, and a cold shiver passed over them.

Rob Runner observed this and he broke into a laugh.

"Revenge is sweet, isn't it?" he asked.

"See here!" exclaimed Wild, "if there is a spark of a man in you, you will shoot us—or, hang us, if you will, but don't put us in that deep hole to starve!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" was all the reply they got.

Then a rope was tied about the body of Wild, and in spite of anything he could do, he was forced to the opening and lowered down.

Down, down he went, and the bottom of the hole was finally reached.

Then the road agents turned to Cheyenne Charlie.

"You go next," said the captain. "If you get hungry before you die you can turn cannibals and eat up the traitor we threw down first."

The rope Wild had been lowered with was a very long one, so the other end was tied beneath the arms of Charlie and he was forced over the brink of the well-like opening.

In the struggle to get the scout into the hole a belt belonging to one of the men, which had become unbuckled, fell into the depths.

There were a knife and revolver sticking in it, and the villains listened for a cry from Wild in case it struck him.

But no cry came.

"It is all right," said Runner. "The pistol and knife will do for them to fight with when they get to quarreling over the remains of Doc Spouter."

"Fightin' with their hands tied!" chuckled Jake Jumper.

Cheyenne Charlie was now pushed over the edge, and down he went to keep the company of Young Wild West.

CHAPTER VI.

IN A HOLE.

"This is awful!" groaned Cheyenne Charlie, as the rope came down and struck the two imprisoned men with force enough to stagger them.

"I know it, but we must not stay here long," was Young Wild West's reply.

"Must not stay here long!" echoed Charlie. "Why--why, kin we git out of here?"

"Do you know what a school teacher once told me?"

"What?"

"There is no such word as fall."

The scout began to brighten up.

Wild's way of talking had great effect on him.

"No school teacher ever told me anything like that," he said, after a pause. "'Cause I never went to school to give her a chance to tell me."

The boulder had been rolled over the mouth of the hole by the road agents, and it was as dark as the grave itself where the two captives had been lowered.

There was a sickening odor in the place, too, and a feeling of nausea came over them.

But Young Wild West was full of grit and determination.

He had not given up yet, by any means.

"Never say die!" was his motto, and he meant to get out of that hole.

They soon became more accustomed to the pent-up air in the hole, and the nauseous feeling gradually left them.

The well-like hole was probably ten feet in diameter, and, as Captain Rob Runner had said, it was fully eighty feet in depth.

Taking the latter fact into consideration, it seemed that the two prisoners must certainly perish unless help came to them from above.

Bound hand and foot, as they were, what hope could they have of getting out without the aid of some one?

Any one else than Young Wild West would have given up in despair.

But he had been thinking hard ever since he found that it was a certainty that they were to be lowered into the hole.

"Charlie," said he, after a pause, "what was that which dropped down here just before they lowered you down?"

"It was a belt that came loose from one of them men up there."

"Was there a knife in it?"

"I don't know."

"We must find out."

"How kin we?"

"I'll show you."

Wild began shifting his position as fast as he could under the circumstances.

He knew about where the belt had landed.

But he had not moved many inches before he came in contact with the dead body that had been thrown down there ahead of them.

It was a grawsome object, but the boy felt that there was no time to think about such things now, and he kept right on.

The belt had landed on the other side of the body, and in order to get to it he must roll over the horrible thing.

Wild did not hesitate.

With a mighty effort, he rolled over to the other side, and then to his great joy, his hands came in contact with the belt the first thing.

His wrists were bound securely together, but that did not prevent him from having the use of his fingers.

As he moved the belt along he came upon the revolver first, and then the knife.

When he had got a firm hold of the handle with his fingers he told his companion to roll up close to him.

"I am going to cut you loose, Charlie," he said. "I may cut your flesh a little in doing it, but it can't be helped."

"Never mind that part of it. I can stand it. Jest git my hands loose, an' I think we'll be able to do something."

By dint of much exertion on the part of both, Wild managed to get the blade of the knife in contact with the rope that bound his companion's wrist.

The two were back to back, and Charlie was forced to sit on the dead body in order to get into the proper position.

Pretty soon the rope was severed and the scout's hands were free!

He felt like giving a joyous whoop, but Wild restrained him.

"We don't want to do anything to attract the attention of the road agents," he said. "Let them think that we are lying here helpless, gradually becoming crazed from fear."

Charlie now took the knife and quickly released his young friend.

A simultaneous sigh of relief came from their lips when they stood erect on the ground at the bottom of the deep hole.

"I guess we are a good way from being dead yet," remarked Young Wild West.

"You're right," answered Cheyenne Charlie in a voice that was full of hope.

"I think I have some matches in my pocket. I'll light one and see how it looks down here."

Suiting the action to the words, Wild produced a match and struck it.

As the flickering flame lighted up the inky gloom the body of the road agent came to view in bold relief.

But that was not all they saw.

In the furthermost corner was a pile of human bones, showing that the body of some one had been dropped there long before that of Doc Spencer.

Or it may have been that some one had been placed there alive!

Anyhow, the sight of the ghastly emblems of mortality caused our two friends to shrug their shoulders and look at each other uneasily.

"It seems as though we was in a grave, don't it?" articulated Charlie.

"Yes, but we must not let it be our grave," was Wild's reply.

"We won't, not if we kin help it."

"We must help it, then."

"What will we do first to try an' git out?"

"See how the sides are all around us," and Wild began to sound them with the handle of the knife that had been of such great use to them.

He had not gone half way around when he came to a place where the earth was soft and yielding.

He struck another match and made an examination of it.

"Charlie," said he, "there is such a thing as digging one's way out of here."

"That's so," was the rejoinder.

"There is a steep precipice around here somewhere; suppose we try and dig for it?"

"But we don't know which way to dig."

"It strikes me that this is the way; I can't tell why, but it does."

"Well, we'll dig, then."

And they did dig! Wild with the knife and Charlie with his hands.

The yielding dirt came out rapidly and the hole was becoming larger all the while.

It was not long before they had dug into the earth wall to a depth of two feet. The dirt taken out was thrown upon the body of the road agent.

At the expiration of fifteen minutes the digging became harder.

Wild lighted a match and held it in the opening they had made, so they could see how it looked.

He discovered a smooth stone in one corner and strove to loosen it with his fingers.

But it would nit budge.

Then, acting on an impulse, he pushed against it as hard as he could.

Much to his astonishment it gave way and the stone disappeared from his sight.

But that was not all.

A faint streak of daylight came through into the well-like opening.

The daring young fellow, whose motto was "Never say die!" turned to his companion with a look of triumph.

"I told you that something urged me to dig in that direction," he said.

"Jerusalem!" was all Cheyenne Charlie could say for a moment.

"We must get to work now and push the dirt through," went on Wild. "We must have something to do it with. Light a match, Charlie, and see if you can't find something."

Charlie did so.

"All that I kin find is one of the thigh bones of ther skeleton," he said.

"That will do; hand it over."

With a slight hesitation, the scout picked up the bone and placed it in the hands of his young friend.

With this Wild had no difficulty in pushing the dirt through and the hole began to rapidly enlarge.

It kept getting lighter all the time, too, and presently they observed the rays of the sun.

"It has cleared up since we came into the road agents' den," observed Young Wild West. "Charlie, we are the luckiest mortals on the face of the earth!"

"I guess we are," was the reply. "Is it big enough for you to stick your head in and look through yet?"

Before Wild could make a reply the opening suddenly became darkened and a voice exclaimed:

"Hello in there!"

A cry of joy escaped the lips of the two imprisoned ones simultaneously.

It was unquestionably the voice of Jim Dart that they heard.

"Hello, yourself!" answered Wild as quickly as he could find the use of his tongue. "Is that you, Jim?"

"Yes," was the reply. "What are you doing there?"

"Trying to dig our way out. We are prisoners in here, along

with a dead man and a skeleton. How came you here so opportunely?"

"We saw the hole being punched in the cliff and investigated."

"I see," laughed Young Wild West.

"The road agents put you there, then?"

"Yes; that is it, exactly."

"Well, I guess we will get you out quick enough. Your horses are right over here a little bit."

Some tall digging was done in the next five minutes, and then Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie crawled through upon a narrow ledge.

They were free at last!

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUEL ON HORSEBACK.

"What happened to you, anyway?" asked Jim, as he seized the hand of his ideal hero and shook it earnestly and affectionately.

"Wait till we get a little farther away from this place, and I will tell you," answered Wild. "I must say that I just experienced about as narrow an escape as I ever did in my life before."

"You didn't act as though you was scared much," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"Well, I never show the white feather, no matter what the conditions are. A person can die but once, you know, and though it is an awful thing to think about, I have made up my mind to meet death squarely when it comes."

"That's ther only right way to look at it," said Jack Robedee, a very serious expression on his face.

The four were now carefully making their way along the ledge and up to the place where Wild and Charlie had left their horses.

The rope the two captives had been lowered into the deep hole with was left there, as they had no particular use for it just then.

When the horses were reached Wild related all that had happened to them, and Jim and Jack opened their eyes in amazement.

"Lowered into a deep, dark pit and left to starve in the company of a dead man and a skeleton!" exclaimed young Dart. "My! but that seems worse than being tied to the stake by the Indians."

"And it is worse. I have experienced both, you know," retorted young Wild West.

"That's right!" exclaimed the three in a breath.

"I guess we had better ride back to Weston now," said Wild, after a pause. "I don't think it would be good policy to meddle with the road agents any more to-day. Charlie and I have been in their headquarters, but we don't know how we got in, as we were blindfolded at the time."

"But we will find ther way to git in before we git through with 'em, though," added Cheyenne Charlie.

It being settled that they were to ride home without doing anything further, they proceeded to do so.

The horses were pretty well rested and they made good time.

The sorrel stallion seemed to be delighted with his young master on his back once more, and it was with no little difficulty that Wild managed to hold him back with his three companions.

There was not a horse in all Weston that could keep up the pace that Spitfire could.

He was a wonder in the kingdom of equines.

Wild and Charlie had not taken the trouble to wash the war-paint from their faces.

They tried to rub it off with a damp blanket, but though it came off sufficiently to expose their disguise, it would not do so now.

Jack Robedee observed that "It always happened that way."

Wild, Jack and Jim went at once to their quarters as soon as they got back to Weston.

Cheyenne Charlie went over to the little cottage where he was living with his wife.

He, of course, had to tell her something of what he had passed through, and she tried hard to get him to promise not to go near the headquarters of the road agents again.

"They have got to be broken up, sis," he replied. "An' I am goin' to tick to Young Wild West till the job is done."

"Very well, then, I will have a talk with Arietta Murdock

and get her to try and influence her lover not to run into needless danger again."

She did see Wild's sweetheart that very evening, and the result was that when Wild came over to see Arietta he received quite a lecture on the dangers of bothering with lawless men.

The daring young fellow laughed.

"What is the matter, little one?" he asked. "You don't think I am going to get killed, do you? Why, it does not lay in that whole band of villains to get the best of me. I am wearing the charm you made for me, you know."

"Yes, but you can run into danger just once too often, you know, Wild."

"Can't help it, little one. I have resolved to break up that gang of road agents, and I am going to do it. You never heard of me failing in anything I ever undertook, did you?"

"No; I will have to admit that."

"Well, just keep a stiff upper lip, then, and wish me luck. It will be accomplished all the quicker then."

Arietta said no more.

Every time she got in an argument with her lover he invariably got the best of her.

She resolved to let him have his own way and say no more about it.

When the stage-coach left the next morning with the mail half a dozen crack shots and old Indian fighters went along as guards.

But the mail-coach was not bothered that day, nor was it for a whole week.

The inhabitants of Weston were beginning to recover from the uneasy feeling the road-agents had caused them to have.

We say the inhabitants, but all of them had not.

Young Wild West and his immediate friends had not forgotten them by any means.

They were quite sure that the villains were but lying low, waiting until they got a chance to make a good haul.

Though he had been blindfolded when led into the hidden retreat of the road agents, Wild knew that it was a very narrow passage that led into the place.

That being a fact, it would be difficult work to get at them, even if they could succeed in finding the secret entrance.

It would take at least two hundred men to do it, and even then there must be a large loss of life on their side.

The road-agents could shoot 'em down as fast as they entered.

Wild figured it out that the best and only sure way to do the business was to send out a decoy stage-coach, and then have a band of determined men somewhere in hiding to pounce upon the masked men the instant they made a hold-up.

He talked the matter over with several of the trusted citizens of the town, and a plan of action was finally agreed upon.

A day or two later it got noised about that a large quantity of gold-dust was to be taken over to Spondulicks under a strong guard.

Just who started the rumor no one appeared to know.

And the time the stuff was to leave Weston was not known.

If the road-agents got hold of this rumor, as they probably would, it would be a pretty sure thing that they would try to get hold of the booty.

They would be running quite a risk, to be sure, but if they could get hold of a fortune all in a heap it would be worth running a risk for.

In making preparations for all this Young Wild West wanted to be sure of the exact spot where the hidden retreat was located.

So the next afternoon he started out alone to ride past the place and take observations.

Spitfire was in fine fettle, as usual, and he soon made the distance to the vicinity of the place.

On the alert for the least sign of danger, Wild rode along.

He passed the spot where he and Cheyenne Charlie had been blindfolded the day they were conducted into the presence of Captain Rob Runner.

Marking the place well in his mind, he went on.

As keenly as he had looked he had failed to discover the least sign of any entrance through the solid rocky wall.

He concluded to ride on for a mile or so, and then come back and try again.

He kept his horse down to an easy canter, holding the bridle-rein with his left hand.

His right hand grasped one of his deadly revolvers. When about a mile had been covered the sound of approaching hoofs came to his ears.

He could not see who was coming, as there was a bend in the road right there.

A horseman was a common thing to meet in that locality, but somehow it struck Wild that it was an enemy who was coming to meet him.

Just why he felt this way he could not have explained.

It was a sort of presentiment.

Wild kept right on, and the next moment the rider appeared to view.

Then it was that he gave a start.

And no wonder!

It was Captain Rob Runner who was coming.

The leader of the road-agents was mounted on a handsome bay, and as he came riding toward our hero at a swinging gallop, his whole appearance was dashing and picturesque.

The instant he beheld Young Wild West his hand flew up and his revolver cracked.

The bullet whistled harmlessly over the boy's head, and as quick as a flash he returned the shot.

Wild's bullet struck the road-agent's revolver just as he was in the act of discharging it again.

It went up from his hand a distance of three feet and fell to the ground.

Captain Runner must have been in a fighting humor that day, for instantly he drew his remaining revolver from his belt.

Crack!

Again Wild's weapon cracked.

Much to the road-agent's surprise and dismay, his other revolver was shot from his hand, the bullet grazing his finger as it glanced off the barrel.

He probably felt that his time had come, knowing full well that he had a deadshot to deal with.

"Dismount and pick up your revolvers!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "I hold you at my mercy, but I won't drop you while you are unarmed."

"Throw yours down, and I'll fight it out with you with knives," was the quick reply.

"I won't throw away my revolvers, but I'll give you my word that I won't use them."

"I'll take your word."

"You may well do so. It is worth more than the words of ten thousand such scoundrels as you are."

"Tell me before we begin," said the captain, "how you got out of the hole we threw you in the other day."

"The dead man helped me out," was the quick reply. "Now, are you ready?"

"Yes."

Both horsemen now grasped bowie knives tightly at their hilts, and as the road-agent said he was ready, Wild trotted his horse forward to meet him.

Some very pretty maneuvering followed, as both were expert at handling a horse.

Young Wild West swooped past his enemy and made a lunge at him that would have certainly finished him had it reached.

Runner wheeled his horse quickly and missed plunging his blade into the boy's back.

Before he could get away Spitfire whirled around like a top, and the two steel blades clashed in the air above their heads.

Sparks flew as this happened.

"I guess I'll get you all right," said Wild, as with a quick downward thrust he sent the road-agent's knife whirling from his hand.

It landed on the ground a dozen feet away.

"I've defeated you squarely," he added, "and now I am going to take you to Weston a prisoner."

"You may shoot me if you like, but I won't go with you."

"Oh, yes, you will. Hold your hands above your head."

The command was a stern one and full of meaning.

Up went Captain Rob Runner's hands.

But at that very instant something happened that Wild had not counted on.

The report of a rifle rang out close at hand, and a bullet flew past his head within an inch of his ear.

Another shot followed almost instantly, the bullet going through the crowd of his hat this time.

He thought it best to get out of the way.

The next shot might be more true to the mark, and he did not care to be shot down by an unseen foe.

He urged his horse off to the left, and as he did so the road-agent took advantage of the interruption and plunged his spurs into the steed he rode.

The animal sprang forward like a shot.

Young Wild West raised his revolver to end the earthly career of Captain Rob Runner.

But he did not press the trigger.

"I can't shoot a man in the back!" he called out. "It is against my principle. We will meet again, my bold captain."

With that he rode off, just as two more bullets flew about his head.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHO IS THE MAN?"

"I believe I have made a mistake," muttered Young Wild West, as he urged his horse forward at a swift gallop. "I should have shot the villain through the heart, instead of disarming him with my bullets. My! but those two shots of mine were about as good as any I ever fired."

The hidden scoundrels who had been shooting at him did not fire any more shots, so after he got half a mile from the spot where the extraordinary duel had taken place he came to a halt.

"I was a fool!" he exclaimed. "Why did I let that scoundrel go? I should have dropped him dead when he fired the first shot at me. The chance of getting him is worse now than before."

After a minute or two of thought he started for Weston.

When he got there he sent for the men who had been selected to make an attack on the road-agents to attend a special meeting that evening.

"What do you propose to do?" asked Jim Dart.

"Run the decoy stage-coach out to-morrow, so it will reach the vicinity of the road-agents' headquarters just about dusk," was the reply.

"And we follow it up?"

"Yes. Thirty of us will be enough to wind them up. If we can only once get between them and the secret entrance to their cave."

Only twenty men, outside of Young Wild West's immediate friends, knew what was up.

They came to the office of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company punctually at eight that evening.

Wild, Jim, Charlie, Jack, old man Murdock and Dove-Eye Dave were present when they got there.

"Gentlemen," said Wild, after he had called the meeting to order, "we are about to put in execution a plan which, I think, will almost surely break up this road-agent gang that is such a pest to us."

"Has it become sufficiently noised about that a special stage-coach will start to-morrow afternoon for Spondulicks with several thousand dollars' worth of gold dust aboard?"

"I guess it has," replied Murdock. "It has been whispered around ther post-office a good deal to-day."

"Well, if that is the case the road-agents ought to certainly get wind of it, as I am certain that they have a confederate in town who keeps them posted on what is going on, in spite of the fact that we run Jake Jumper out."

"That's right!" cried several of the men.

"We will hitch four horses to the old stage-coach," went on Young Wild West. "and rig up four or five dummies to put on top of it. Then we will drive it up to a point half a mile this side of the road-agents' hang-out and send it on with only the dummies in charge of it."

"We will lay back, and unless we hear the sounds of shooting sooner we will follow at a quick gallop ten minutes later. If that don't bring things to a focus, why we will have to think of some other plan, that is all."

"That'll work all right!" exclaimed Dove-Eye Dave. "unless they git wind of the trick."

"They can't very well do that, without some one who is right here now sends 'em word," said old man Murdock.

"Gentlemen," spoke up Wild, "have any of you breathed anything what we have been talking about to an outsider?"

Every man present was ready to swear that he had not.

"Well, if that is the case, there is only one chance out of a thousand of the plan not working. Be ready to start at seven sharp to morrow evening. We will set to the dummies and the stage coach."

This being settled, the meeting adjourned and the men

returned to their respective homes, or the places where they usually stayed evenings.

Young Wild West was pretty sure that the plan they had decided upon would work.

If it did not it must certainly be that the road-agents had been informed.

The next morning the old stage-coach which had been thrown aside for a newer and better one was brought out and put in shape so it could be used.

After this was done Wild went to assist Jim and Jack, who were busy fixing up the dummies.

They had decided to make five of them, and when twelve o'clock came they were completed.

Everything being satisfactorily arranged, our friends turned their attention to their gold mine.

They did not work it steadily, and when they did take out any dust they always did it when no one was around.

They had struck it rich, but no one knew just how rich.

And that was their business and no one else's.

Shortly before seven o'clock four of the poorest horses in use by the Wild West Mining and Improvement Co. were brought around and hitched to the stage-coach.

Then the dummies were placed in position, and when the start was made, punctually at seven, it looked exactly as though there were six men aboard, when in reality there was only one, who would do the driving till they got to the place where they intended to let the four horses go it alone.

Behind it came the mounted men with Young Wild West at their head.

Each man was armed to the teeth, and a more determined or formidable-looking lot would have been hard to find.

There were just twenty-nine of them, the man who was driving the stage-coach making the full number thirty.

He would mount his horse, which a friend was leading for him, when the proper time arrived.

Darkness had just about set in when Wild called a halt at the spot he had selected for that purpose.

The reins were fastened to one of the dummies, so it looked as though he was alive and driving.

Then the rest of the make-believe men were touched up and adjusted.

"Everything is right now, I guess," said Wild. "Start the horses."

The driver did so, urging them into a brisk trot.

There was not one in a million who would not have been deceived.

The figures looked life-like in the faint, uncertain light made by the stars.

The horses kept on a trot until they were out of hearing, and then our friends waited anxiously.

They knew if the road-agents attacked the outfit they would ambush it and go right in to settle things up quick, so they could be off with the booty in a hurry.

"This reminds me of somethin' that happened to me when I was a boy," observed Jack Robedee. "I think of it every time I have to wait for somethin' important to happen."

"What was it?" asked Cheyenne Charlie.

"Well, you see, the biggest part of my childhood days were spent in the East. I didn't come West until I was sixteen or seventeen."

"Well, what has that got to do with the waiting part of the story?" asked Jim Dart.

"A whole lot. It would be a funny old story that did not have a beginnin' to it. You see, I lived in the East, an'—"

"You told us that before," interrupted old man Murdock.

"See here!" exclaimed Robedee, with flashing eyes, "do you want me to tell the story or not?"

"Do you think you will have time to finish it before we leave here?" queried Wild.

"Oh, yes. You see, I lived in the East when I was a boy, an' one day—"

"It are a great wonder to me why you ain't about three feet taller than you are," put in Dove-Eye Dave.

"Why do yer say that?" demanded Jack, hotly.

"Because yer lived in ther yeast. Yeast will make things rise, yer know."

There was a laugh at this, and Robedee refused point blank to tell the story.

Ten minutes rolled around.

Not a shot had been fired, and Young Wild West was growing anxious.

Suddenly the clatter of hoofs and the rumbling of wheels was heard.

Every man in the party pricked up his ears.

"If I ain't mistaken, that's our rig coming back," said Cheyenne Charlie.

Young Wild West looked grave.

"It sounds like it," he answered.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and presently they could discern the approaching vehicle coming toward them through the gloom of the night.

The man who had driven the rig up to that point rode out into the road to make sure.

"It's ther decoy rig, as you call it," he observed. "The hosses are slowin' down now. Shall I stop 'em?"

"Certainly," answered Wild.

The next minute he was alongside the leaders.

As they were not over-spirited he had no difficulty in bringing them to a halt.

With the exception of one thing, the stage-coach was the same as when they last saw it.

The exception was that a big placard was attached to the back of it.

One of the miners had a lantern, and as he held it up Wild read the following:

"This rig won't go. Send along the genuine thing, and we'll do business with you. (Signed) CAPT. ROB RUNNER."

For ten seconds the utmost silence prevailed.

Then Young Wild West turned to the men, and, in a clear, but perfectly calm voice, said:

"Gentlemen, there was a traitor at our meeting last night, and that being the case, he is here now, as all those present last night are with us to-night. Who is the man?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF THE TRAITOR.

Young Wild West scanned the faces of the men keenly as he said there was a traitor among them.

He noticed that there appeared to be but one among them who acted at all uneasy.

This was a miner who was called Reddy, partly because his hair was red, and mostly because he always wore a red shirt and red leather belt.

His reputation in Weston was generally good, and that made our hero feel surprised when he noticed that the man showed signs of being guilty.

But he decided to say nothing to him just then.

"It is not likely that the guilty party will step forward and acknowledge it," went on Wild. "But you must all agree with me when I say that if the road-agents had not been apprised of what we were going to do the stage-coach would never have come back with that placard on it."

"That's all right!" exclaimed Dove-Eye Dave, and to a man the rest joined in expressing the same sentiment.

"If the stage-coach had gone on without being molested I should have been inclined to think that the villains had not heard of any of our plans, not even the report that a large amount of gold-dust was to be taken over to Sondulicks to-night."

"Sure thing!" cried Cheyenne Charlie.

"Well, do you know what I think would be the proper thing to do?"

"No. What is it?"

"Go into camp a little way below here."

"And stay all night?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To find out who the traitor is."

Wild cast a swift glance at Reddy as he said this.

The man turned a shade paler, but otherwise did not act out of the ordinary.

"I am certain he is the man," the boy thought. "Now, to prove it before daylight to-morrow morning."

"Well, if we are goin' to camp around here we'd better be lookin' for a good place," spoke up old man Murdock.

Every one seemed to agree on this point, so they rode slowly in the direction of Weston, taking the stage-coach and horses with them.

There were plenty of places that would do for camping purposes, and they found one about a quarter of a mile distant.

"Tain't likely there will be any rain to-night," observed

Jack Robedee, "an' if there is these rocks will shield us from it pretty well."

"Start up a fire, boys, and make yourselves as comfortable as possible," said Young Wild West. "We have got two things to do before sunrise to-morrow mornlnng. One is to find who the traitor is, and the other is to march into the road-agents' secret cave and kill or capture the whole of them. I know one way to get in, and I'll lead."

Wild had a point in sayng this.

He knew that if Reddy was really the traitor he would sneak away at the first opportunity to go and inform the villains that an attack was to be made upon their rendezvous.

He had no idea of making such an attack, but every one there took it for granted that he did, and the men were ready and willing.

The spot they had chosen to stop in was well secluded on all sides.

It could not be seen from the roadway, and Wild was sure that it was far out of view of the road-agents' den.

The horses were tied, and then some of the men began to gather wood to make a fire.

It was a warm enough night, but a camp without a campfire did not seem right, so they were going to have it.

A good one was soon blazing away, and then those who smoked lighted their pipes, and those who did not worked themselves into as comfortable positions as they could.

Young Wild West counted the men over without letting them know it, and found that they were all there.

He was watching Reddy all the time, but he thought that after all he might be innocent, and some one else be the traitor.

Still he would have been willing to bet a thousand dollars against a thousand cents that he was the man they wanted.

"Gentlemen," said Dove-Eye Dave, as he sent a puff of tobacco smoke sailing toward the blue dome over his head, "I think we ought to give Jack Robedee a show to tell that yarn of his. What do you think about it?"

"Yes, yes!" came the reply from all sides.

"There is no use in my tryin' to tell ther story," observed Jack, shaking his head. "I won't be able to say over three words afore some one will interrupt me."

"No one will interrupt you this time. Let her go!"

"I don't know as it is much of a story," began Robedee. "I made a remark when we was back there that waitin' reminded me of somethin' that happened to me when I was a boy. I lived in ther East when I was a boy, you know."

The men looked at each other, but no one deigned to make any remark.

"I was a boy of fourteen when this walting business happened to me," went on Jack, not noticing the glances that had been cast around from one to the other.

"Me an' another feller named Lew Jenkins made up our minds to run away from home an' go out West. We had read a good deal about ther gold fever in California, an' we made up our minds that we could get rich in about ten days after we got there.

"So one night we both sneaked out of ther homes of our infancy an' started for ther West, carryin' a bundle apiece.

"There was a railroad track about ten miles from ther place where we lived, so we made straight for that.

"All ther money we had between us was eighteen shillings, but we reckoned that would be enough, as we didn't intend to pay our fare."

"You were going to beat your way to California, then?" said Jim Dart, who was deeply interested in the story.

"Yes; that's just what we intended to do, but we didn't exactly succeed in doin' it. Anyhow, we reached ther railroad track about daylight in ther mornin', an' then we walked along until we come to a station.

"We was both putty well tired out when we got there, so we sat down to wait. We was walting for a train to come along that would take us to ther glorious land of gold, where ther settin' sun bathed in ther calm waters of ther Pacific Ocean! That's ther way I read it in a story paper.

"You see, we didn't like to ask ther man what tended ther switch an' looked after ther depot what time a train would be along; he might ask us if we wanted to buy tickets.

"Well, we kept walting, walting for that train, an' it was a putty long wait, I kin tell you."

"After we'd been there about two hours we heard ther whistle blow in ther distance.

"We jumped up an' grabbed our bundles. But jest then we happened to look down ther road an' we seen a team comin' like anything.

"I noticed that ther horses looked very much like ther team that Lew Jenkins' father owned, but I didn't say anything jest then."

"Lew turned pale, though, so I think he noticed it, too."

"Jest about ther time ther train got to ther station ther wagon drove up. My father an' Lew's father jumps out, each with a horsewhip in his hand."

Jack paused and took a chew of tobacco.

"Is that all?" asked Dove-Eye Dave.

"Putty near enough, ain't it?"

"Well, I don't know. Didn't yer catch ther train?"

"No; we caught a good walloping, an' was taken back home. You see, they got onto our runaway scheme shortly after we sneaked away, an' they hitched up an' drove after us. That's all of ther story. I ain't got to California yet, an' I guess I never will."

The laugh and good-natured chaff that followed showed that Robedee's story of "Walting" was appreciated.

During the recital of it Wild had become quite interested.

He forgot to keep a watch on Reddy for about the space of half a minute, just as the yarn was concluded.

When he looked again the fellow was not sitting where he had been.

Wild cast a quick look around the entire assemblage.

Reddy was not there.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed the recognized leader of the men, "I am going to call the roll. Please answer to your names promptly."

The rough but honest men looked at each other in surprise. They could not quite understand what Wild was driving at.

But they were ready to do anything he said.

Young Wild West had the names of all present on a sheet of paper, and he promptly began to call them off.

He fixed it so that Reddy came last, and when every man had answered he called out in the same voice he had used, without raising his eyes from the paper:

"Reddy!"

There was no answer.

Then the men began to look around to see where the fellow was.

"Reddy!" again called Wild, this time in a louder voice. There was no answer.

"Boys," said Young Wild West, after probably half a minute had passed, "the first thing for us to do now is to find Reddy."

Jim Dart instantly understood what these words meant.

"Reddy is the traitor, then?" he said.

"Yes; beyond the question of a doubt he is. Charlie, you start out and see if you can overtake him before he gets to the cave of the road-agents."

Cheyenne Charlie stepped forward as quick as a flash.

"All right, Captain Wild," he said. "I'll bring him back if there's any possible way to do it."

Then he was off into the darkness like a sleuth-hound on the trail.

The truth of the matter was that Young Wild West could not have selected a better one to send on this errand.

Cheyenne Charlie had seen Reddy get up and leave the camp-fire.

He had thought nothing of it, as he believed the fellow to be as loyal as he was himself.

"Thunder! What a fool I was!" muttered the scout, as he hurried off on his mission. "I wonder if Wild knew I saw that feller go?"

He had seen him, and what was more, he knew just the direction he took.

Reddy felt that he was taklng desperate chances, so he sneaked off in a direction that was contrary to the way he wanted to go, knowing full well that it was the only possible chance he had to get away without being seen.

It would take him at least ten minutes to get out upon the roadway by his going this way, as he had a big hill to go around.

Cheyenne Charlie was right onto the game now, and he made direct for the road.

He knew that Reddy would certa'nly make for the retreat of the road-agents, and he meant to follow him and kill or capture him, as the circumstances demanded, before he got there.

Fully eleven minutes had elapsed since Reddy disappeared from the camp when Charlie reached the roadway.

That gave the traitor about a minute's start.

The scout could not figure how far he was behind the man

he wanted, but he was certain that he had not reached the roadway in time to head him off.

With his revolver in his hand Charlie started up the road in the direction of the secret hiding-place of the villains.

He went on a run, touching only his toes to the ground as he sped along.

He could scarcely hear his own footsteps.

Nearer and nearer he approached to the spot where the road-agents always disappeared.

When within about fifty yards of it he detected footsteps ahead of him.

The next instant he saw a form flitting along in the shadow of the rocks.

"Halt!" he called. "I've got you covered."

The man did so instantly.

It was evident that he did not know whether it was a friend or foe who had challenged him.

Cheyenne Charlie did not want to discharge his revolver if he could help it, for fear he would have the road-agents swarming out in a jiffy to see what was the matter.

But he kept his gun in his hand just the same, his finger touching the trigger, ready to send a leaden pill on a mission of death.

"Don't you move!" he called out in a low tone, as he got a little closer. "If you do I'll cut out ther center of your heart with a bullet."

The fellow now stood with both hands above his head. He was either a rank coward, or else he felt pretty sure that it was a friend approaching him.

"Are you from the inside?" he asked in a voice that trembled a little.

"Yes," answered Cheyenne Charlie, on the impulse of the moment.

"You ain't, though, 'cause I don't recognize your voice."

"Well, I'm a new one. Only ther capen an' one or two others knows me."

"I've been playin' spy down in Weston for ther band."

"Oh! So you are ther man, then. I've jest been scouting around a bit an' run across ther camp of ther vigilantes down here. What are they staying down there for?"

"They are coming up here to attack us afore mornin'. That's what made me sneak away from them so soon as I got a chance. They are a desperate lot, with that Young Wild West to lead 'em, an' they might do a whole lot of damage if ther band wasn't ready for 'em."

"By Jove, you're right!" said Charlie, leading the fellow right on.

By this time he was right in front of the traitor within half a dozen feet.

Reddy had dropped his arms, but still held his revolver in his hands.

He was just about to say something further when he caught a glimpse of the face of the man he was talking to in the starlight.

"Blazes!" he cried, suddenly, "it is Cheyenne Charlie from ther camp!"

Up flew his hand to shoot, but he was not quick enough.

Charlie showed remarkable activity just then, and knocked his pistol from his hand.

"You come with me, Reddy!" he exclaimed, in a whisper.

"If I've got to die I might as well do it right here," was the rather unexpected reply. "Wild West will certainly have me hung for bein' a traitor if I am taken back there."

Out came his bowie knife as he spoke, and, regardless of the fact that Cheyenne Charlie's pistol was aimed at his heart, he lunged viciously forward.

The scout avoided the blow dexterously, and then strove to break the villain's wrist with a blow from the butt of his revolver.

But he missed.

"Put up that knife an' come with me, or, by ther livin' jingo, I'll shoot yer!" he cried.

"I won't!" was the retort, and another wild lunge was made at him.

Crack!

"I had to do it," muttered the scout, as the traitor dropped to the ground, shot through the heart.

But at that very instant a dozen men appeared from he knew not where and pounced upon him.

He succeeded in firing just one shot, and then he was seized and made a prisoner.

The place where the conversation and fight had taken place was right at the hidden entrance to the cave, and the voices

and noise made by the scuffle had reached the ears of the road-agent guard.

The bandits were too late to save the life of the traitor and receive the information he had to impart to them.

Cheyenne Charlie was whisked inside the retreat before he was aware of it.

What was to be his fate he did not know.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROAD-AGENT BAND IS BROKEN UP.

Young Wild West waited for fifteen minutes after Cheyenne Charlie had gone.

Then he began to grow uneasy.

It occurred to him that perhaps the scout had become too reckless and run himself into danger.

"Boys," said he, "I guess we had better be doing something."

"Jest say what it is," promptly replied Dove-Eye Dave.

"Cheyenne Charlie has gone to look for Reddy, and if he hasn't found him the traitor has reached the road-agents long before this."

"Yes."

"And he has told them that we intend to attack them before sunrise to-morrow."

"That is sartin."

"Well, we will go now and see what we can do with them. How much loose gunpowder is there in the gang?"

Three or four of the men carried muzzle-loading rifles, because they were old-fashioned in their ways and believed that they were better than the Sharps and Springfields their companions had.

Each one of these had at least half a pound of powder with them.

They handed their flasks and horns over as Wild asked for them.

"Are you goin' to blow 'em up?" queried Jack Robedee.

"Not exactly. I am going to give them a scare that will last till we get at them, that's all."

"Oh!" came from a number of the men, who thought they saw the point.

Wild now produced his notebook and tore some leaves from it.

Then he proceeded to make some fuses by means of the paper and a few grains of the powder.

Into each of the flasks and horns he stuck one of the fuses, fastening them in tight by means of more paper.

"Now, - come on!" he exclaimed. "We will go on foot. This scheme of mine ought to work, if the other did not."

The next minute the men were marching to the road in double file.

"Make as little noise as possible," was the order they received.

The distance to the place where Wild and Cheyenne Charlie had clambered to the opening over the road-agents' stable was soon reached.

Young Wild West called a halt.

"I want two men to go with me," said our hero. "Jim, you and Jack Robedee will do."

To say that the two were delighted would be putting it mildly.

They felt highly honored.

"Now, jest tell us what to do," said Dove-Eye Dave.

"I will place you in charge of the men till I come back," Wild replied. "When you hear the crack of my revolver march twenty paces up the road. If the road-agents should chance to appear suddenly, order them to surrender."

"An' if they don't surrender?"

"You know what to do in that case."

"You bet I do. Now, then, boys, do you understand what we've got to do?"

"We do!" was the unanimous reply.

"Very well," observed Young Wild West. "What you do must be done quickly. We can't afford to lose a single man, you know."

After again instructing them so there could be no possible mistake, Wild turned to Jim and Jack and bade them follow him.

He divided the improvised bomb-shells among them, as he could not conveniently carry them all and be free to act.

Through the narrow fissure they made their way.

"Where are you going?" whispered Jack.

"To the natural roof of the stable of the villains," was the answer.

"Oh!"

That was all that was said.

They placed the utmost confidence in their leader.

Up the ascent went Young Wild West, and as noiselessly as possible his two companions followed.

The plan that Wild was going to act upon had come in his head all of a sudden.

"I wish I knew what had become of Charlie," he thought.

"It strikes me that he has got into trouble, and if he has it must certainly be with the road-agents."

As he neared the narrow place that formed the roof of the cave the confused sound of voices came to his ears from below.

This caused him to move to the spot faster.

The next minute he was at the edge of the narrow opening.

He moved along so he could peer down and see what was going on below.

As he did so he came in contact with a heavy stick which was placed directly across the rift in the rocky ceiling.

Jim and Robedee crawled to his side.

As they did so a voice that could not have been over four feet below them said:

"Give me ther end of ther rope, so's I kin git it over."

Jim and Jack did not know what this meant.

But Wild did. He comprehended that the villains were going to hang somebody.

And who would the somebody be more apt to be than Cheyenne Charlie?

"Stand ready to act the instant I give an order," he whispered. "There is something strange going to happen directly."

Much puzzled at his words, the two nodded.

Young Wild West now leaned over and looked downward. The cave was lighted by a couple of lanterns, and a startling sight met the gaze of the daring boy.

Directly beneath him was a chair resting on the top of a table upon which a man was in the act of climbing.

In the midst of a crowd of men stood Cheyenne Charlie, his hands firmly bound to his sides.

The villain standing on the chair had a rope, which he passed over the piece of wood that rested across the split in the rocky roof.

Wild was right in his conjecture.

Cheyenne Charlie was the man the scoundrels were going to hang.

The road-agents were making so much noise among themselves that Wild could speak to his companions without being heard by those below.

In a very few words he told them what the villains were up to.

"We must seize Charlie and haul him up here," he added. "It must be done quickly, too. Jack, light your pipe, and hurry about it!"

Robedee did so.

The rope was now over the piece of wood, and the next minute Charlie was lifted upon the table.

"We won't lower you in the hole this time," said the voice of Captain Rob Runner. "I was going to shoot you, but I thought you would like a hanging better."

"Go ahead an' do your worst. You can't make me whimper," was the brave scout's reply.

"Put the noose about his neck and get him on the chair, so he will have a good drop. If his neck don't stretch a yard or two I'll miss my guess."

Charlie made a gallant struggle to free himself, but it was no use. They had him tied well, and he could do nothing.

They got him upon the chair, and the instant he stood upright Young Wild West exclaimed:

"Pull him up!"

Three strong arms shot downward and as many hands seized the apparently doomed man by the collar of his buckskin shirt.

Up he went, noose, rope and all.

Before the astonished villains below could pull down on the rope Wild severed it with his knife.

Then grabbing the pipe from Jack's mouth, he touched the fuse of one of the powder flasks to the fire and dropped it through the opening.

The improvised bombshell did not reach the ground before it exploded, knocking the road-agents over like so many ten-pins.

"Cut him loose and then get around to the front!" exclaimed Wild. "I am going to drive these fellows out if I can."

While his order was being obeyed he lighted another fuse.

This was attached to a powder-horn which was full to the stopper.

Forward into the cave the daring young fellow hurried it, and when it exploded the rock shook under him.

But that was not all.

A piece of it became loosened, and before he could catch himself he went down into the cave below.

Young Wild West landed on all fours.

But he was standing upright almost instantly.

The place was full of smoke, and the whinnying and kicking of the frightened horses belonging to the gang of villains were something terrible.

Wild felt sorry for them, and hoped that he had not been the means of killing or injuring any of them.

But a human life had been at stake, and what he did was necessary.

The boy felt around him, and his hands came in contact with the table.

At the same instant his feet trod on the rope that was to have hanged Cheyenne Charlie.

This he picked up.

Then he quietly got upon the table.

He was not the least bit disturbed now, as he knew he could get out.

He got upon the table, righted up the chair, and then got upon that.

The cross-piece of wood was still there, as that part of the opening had not broken away.

The smoke was pouring upward in a volume, and Wild knew that the road-agents would soon be able to see him, providing they had nerve enough to venture in the stable.

He concluded to let another bombshell go.

Robedee's pipe had been lost in his sudden descent into the cave, so he lighted a match.

He touched the fuse to the flame, and then hurled the deadly missile toward the main cave.

Bomb!

Once more a thunderous report rang out, and once more Young Wild West found himself sprawling on the floor of the cave.

Another portion of the rock had given away and struck him on the shoulder in its descent.

But it was only a glancing blow, and he was not injured, though shaken up considerably.

As he got himself in shape once more he heard the cracking of firearms.

The outlaws had left the cave, thinking that they would be blown into eternity if they remained there.

That is what Wild thought.

He concluded to feel his way into the main cave.

If there were any of the scoundrels there he would make them prisoners or else give them their just deserts.

Feeling his way along carefully, he soon came to an opening that appeared to be a sort of natural doorway.

It was the one that led into the cave of the road-agents.

The smoke was just as thick in there as it was in the stable, so if there was any one there they would not know of his presence unless they ran against him.

The firing outside was now fast and furious, showing that the villains were putting up a stiff fight.

Wild groped his way along, and presently his foot came in contact with a human body.

A cry of terror instantly followed, and the boy pricked up his ears.

He thought he recognized the voice.

Dropping to the floor he placed the muzzle of his revolver against the face of a man.

"If you make any more noise I'll let daylight through you!" he exclaimed.

"Is that you, Young Wild West?" came the reply, in trembling tones.

"Aha!" said Wild. "So it is Buck Wood, is it? I thought I knew you. What are you doing here? Why didn't you go out and put up a fight with the rest?"

"Don't kill me, Wild!" was the pleading retort.

"No; I won't. I'll let some one else do that," and feeling over him Wild took his weapons from him.

"Now get up!" he ordered.

The cowardly cowboy did so.

"I promised you that I would shoot you on sight, so you

can consider yourself lucky that there is so much smoke in here that I can't see you."

At this juncture the firing outside suddenly ceased, and the next moment some one came rushing into the cave in a hurry.

Whoever it was did not stop in the main cave, but went right to the stable.

A low whistle sounded, but was quickly drowned by a loud cheer from the victorious miners outside.

Wild could not conjecture as to whether it was one of the road-agents or one of his own party who had entered and gone into the stable.

He thought it might be Jim or Robedee looking for him.

Anyhow, he concluded to take his prisoner outside and turn him over to the care of the men.

"Come on," he said to Buck Wood, "don't try to get away; it will be no use."

The coward went willingly enough, and when he was ordered to show the way out he did so.

The canvas had been thrown aside in their mad rush, and the road agents had not closed it again.

"Is everything all right?" asked Wild, as he stepped into the open air.

"Yes," answered Dove-eye Dave, stepping forward. "We've got all of 'em that is alive, I guess."

"How about Rob Runner?"

"He must be among them dead, I guess."

"Well, here is our friend Buck Wood. Just take care of him, somebody. I am going back into the cave. There is some one in there yet. Is it any of our crowd?"

"No. We are all here 'cept Dan Lagger an' Bill Cannon, who went under in their fight."

"Then there is one of the road agents in there. I—"

Before Young Wild West could finish the sentence there was a clatter of hoofs and a horse dashed from the entrance of the retreat and went galloping away in the darkness.

There was a man on the animal's back, too, but the whole thing happened so sudden and unexpected that the horseman was around a bend in the road before the men could raise their rifles to fire at him.

"That was Captain Rob Runner," said Buck Wood.

Young Wild West did not say a word, but he started off down the road in a direction opposite to that taken by the captain of the road agents, as fast as he could run.

He was going after his horse Spitfire.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Dove-eye Dave gave the order to march back to their camp as soon as Young Wild West started for his horse.

They were only a little over half way there when they met him riding back with the speed of the wind.

"Take the prisoners to Weston!" he shouted as he dashed by. "I am going to look for Rob Runner!"

The men gave a cheer, and Cheyenne Charlie started on a run.

He wanted to get his horse and follow Wild.

Jim Dart and Jack Robedee wanted to, also; but they did not take things upon themselves like Cheyenne Charlie did.

He was an older man than they, and was generally the right bower of the young Prince of the Saddle in all his dangerous exploits.

So when they met the scout riding toward them just as they were turning in to get their horses, they simply gave him a cheer.

Then they rode back to Weston with the rest.

There were nineteen prisoners with them.

The rest of the road agents had been killed, with the exception of their captain.

It was past midnight when the hustling little mining town was reached.

The nine prisoners were taken to the jail, and a strong guard placed over them.

The miners were not going to depend on the jailer who had become drunk and allowed his prisoners to escape before.

Jack Robedee was one of the men to act as guard, and as he never went to sleep in neglect of his duty, it was safe to say that the villains would not get away.

It was not until the next morning that the inhabitants of Weston learned what had happened the night before.

The news that the road agents had made their last hold-up

was gratifying to them, and loud were their praises for Young Wild West and his band of determined followers.

The loss of two men in the conflict was saddening, but there was no way to help it.

They had volunteered to go, the same as the rest, and they had died while doing their duty.

But there were two in the town who were very much worried over the outcome of the capture of the road agents.

They were Arietta Murdock and the wife of Cheyenne Charlie.

The fact of Wild and Charlie not coming back with the others made them think that they had been killed.

They both sought out Jim Dart the first thing in the morning, and wanted the full particulars.

Jim told them just what he knew of it.

"Do you mean to say that my husband is alive?" asked the neat little woman who had become the bride of the scout.

"He was, and very much so when I saw him last," replied Jim.

"I don't believe you."

"I am telling you nothing but the truth."

"Then why did he not come back with the rest of the men?"

"He went after Wild, as I told you before."

"I believe he thinks more of Wild than he does of me, then," was the reply, and the woman promptly went into a pout.

"I don't know about that, I am sure," retorted Jim.

"Wild has saved his life more than once. Probably that is the reason he wants to go with him on these dangerous occasions," put in Arietta.

"Oh, forgive me for talking the way I did," and sobbing, the woman threw herself in the arms of the girl.

"I have nothing to forgive you for," was the answer. "I tell you, Anna, what we will do. There are no more road agents to interfere with one on the road; we will ride out that way and meet them when they come back."

"How do we know that they will come back?"

"Oh, I am confident that they will. Wild is bound to have that man called Rob Runner, and as soon as he gets him he will come back all right. Will you go with me?"

"Yes."

"Then order your horse saddled and we will start at once."

As the two walked away Jim Dart smiled softly to himself.

"A woman's love is all right, I guess," he muttered. "By jove! I think I will hunt up a girl and see what it is like to have some one crying over you every time you go away from home."

We must now turn our attention to Young Wild West.

The boy was determined to overtake the captain of the road agents, and he inwardly vowed that he would not return without accomplishing this purpose.

If the villain kept on the straight road for the prairie he was sure that Spitfire would be equal to the task of overtaking him before morning.

Rob Runner had a good horse, but the sorrel stallion was a better one.

"He is not liable to take the road to Spondulicks," thought Wild as he rode swiftly along. "I'll run chances that he has gone the other way."

On he galloped, the horse seeming tireless.

By and by the moon arose and he could see objects ahead of him.

It now behooved him to be cautious, as there was no telling but that the villain he was pursuing might lay in ambush in anticipation of some such thing.

Runner must have had a good twenty minutes start of him, but if he was going that way it could not be long now before he was overtaken.

Somewhere about two o'clock in the early morning Wild halted to give his noble steed a short rest.

Just as he did so he heard the faint sound of receding hoof-beats.

Instantly he was all attention.

"That must be him," he muttered. "On, good Spitfire. A short, quick race now, and it will all be over!"

The horse responded nobly, and coming to a straight piece of the broken mountain road, Wild beheld a horseman going at a very tired gait.

"Stop a minute!" he called out. "I am in distress. Can't you help me out?"

These words had the effect he hoped they would, for the horseman stopped at once.

He waited until Wild rode up.

The moment he got near enough to distinguish his form the boy saw that it was not Rob Runner.

The stranger seemed to be wounded, and on inquiry Wild learned that a stranger had met him, and after shooting him in the arm, had forced him to trade horses.

"My horse was comparatively fresh and his was played out," he said. "You can see how he is now."

"What sort of a looking man was the fellow?" asked Wild.

The reply satisfied him that it was Rob Runner to a certainty.

"He went this way, did he?"

"Yes," said the stranger.

"Well, he is the man I am after. If you can't keep up with me I will see you after I have settled accounts with him."

Young Wild West felt that he did not have the time to attend to the man's wounded arm.

He wanted to overtake Rob Runner.

He rode along for another hour, and then took a short rest.

He knew the villain he was pursuing would have to rest his horse, and so he was not losing any time by doing it himself.

In another hour it would be daylight.

So Wild rode along just as determined as ever.

With the dawn of the day his spirits went up a trifle.

Spitsfire was doing nobly. He had made a splendid record, and had it not been for the fact that a fresh horse was placed in the race against him, it would have been over long before this.

As the sun arose Young Wild West halted for another brief rest.

He dismounted and stood on the brink of a precipice looking off to the left, for that was the direction in which the road ran.

Almost the first thing he saw was a horse and rider resting beside a boulder.

The distance was nearly a thousand yards.

Young Wild West raised his rifle to his shoulder, but lowered it with a shake of his head.

"I can't do it," he muttered. "It looks too much like murder to shoot a man that way, no matter if he is richly deserving of it. No! I'll give him a chance to surrender, and if he don't, one of us will go under!"

Wild quickly mounted and started again.

He got within two hundred yards before the road agent captain saw him.

The villain must have recognized his relentless pursuer at once, for he mounted his horse.

But instead of fleeing he turned about and came to meet him.

He seemed to be crazed, for he acted very strangely.

Wild kept him well covered as he approached, and finally when he was near enough he concluded to halt him.

But just then the voice of Rob Runner rang out stern and clear:

"Halt! Hold up your hands!"

"I must tell you to do that," replied Wild calmly. "I have got the drop on you, Rob Runner. You may as well give in and go with me quietly."

The outlaw gave a violent start, as though he was awaking from a sudden sleep.

"Ha! Young Wild West!" he cried in his old vengeful tone.

"So we meet again, do we?"

"Yes, Captain Rob Runner, we do. I want to tell you that you have made your last hold-up! Are you going with me quietly or not?"

"Go with you quietly! Mind your eye, now!"

He fired his revolver without raising his hand, and the bullet grazed the thigh of Young Wild West, but not enough to draw the blood.

Crack!

It was Wild's revolver that spoke this time.

Captain Rob Runner sat rigid in the saddle for the space of ten seconds, and then sank forward on the neck of his horse.

There was a small, jagged hole in the center of his forehead, and the blood that came from it flowed upon the horse's neck and mingled with the perspiration that was dripping to the ground.

Young Wild West turned from the sight.

He had no liking for the shedding of human blood.

But were such people as Captain Rob Runner really human? That was a question that could not be answered without debate.

Young Wild West was about as tired as his faithful horse, and he turned and rode to the shade of a tree, for as early as it was the sun was scorching hot.

Dismounting, he threw himself on the ground.

In spite of himself he could not keep his eyes open, and he had not been there over five minutes when he was fast asleep.

He was awakened about an hour later by the voice of Cheyenne Charlie.

"Did you think that Captain Rob Runner was the last enemy you had in the world?" asked the scout.

"I guess that is it," was the reply, as the boy got upon his feet, rubbing his eyes.

With Charlie was the stranger Wild had overtaken.

"I see you got your man," he said, pointing to a body which lay stiff and cold in the road.

"Yes; I got him. He tried hard to down me first, though, but couldn't. See where his off-handed shot went," and Wild showed the mark of the road agent's bullet on his thigh.

"I could not help starting out after you," said Cheyenne Charlie. "I thought I might be needed, but I see I wasn't."

"Oh, I don't know. Your company will make it pleasant for me on the way back."

"I am going that way, too," spoke up the stranger. "I was heading for Weston from Spondulicks, but turned the wrong way."

"Well, you can go back with us. You'll find worse places than Weston and worse people than Young Wild West and his friends."

The man gave a start.

"You don't mean to say that you are Young Wild West!" he exclaimed.

"That is about the size of it."

"Well, I am glad to meet you. I have heard a great deal about you, and I assure you that I feel highly honored to make your acquaintance."

The stranger's name was John Westlake. He had come out that way in search of his fortune, like a great many before him.

The three rode along until noon, and then who should they meet but Arietta and Charlie's wife.

The meeting was an affectionate one.

"It is all over, little one," said Wild, as he kissed his pretty sweetheart. "We can live in peace in Weston now."

The ride home was made in due time, and then they settled down to lead a quiet life for a while.

But such a thing was impossible for a young fellow like Young Wild West to do.

He was bound to live a life of action, as our next issue will show.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S PLUCK; OR, BOUND TO BEAT THE BAD MEN."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Believing that the money expended each month by the county for coyote scalps is greater than the damage done by the pests, the supervisors of Woodland, Cal., have repealed an ordinance passed in 1911 providing a bounty on coyote scalps. The county moneys were being appreciably decreased by the claims of coyote hunters.

Postmasters are urged to the greatest possible economy, consistent with adequate mail service, in a communication issued by First Assistant Postmaster General Roper. The statement points out that the decrease in postal revenues since Aug. 1, 1914, caused by unsettled conditions created by the war, makes a more economical administration of the postal service necessary.

A. A. Henry, of Hoxie, Ark., aged fifty-five, who makes his living by doing odd jobs about town, had saved up fifty \$20 gold pieces. For safekeeping he placed them in a fruit jar and buried the jar. One night he dreamed that the hiding-place of his money had been discovered and that it had been stolen. Next morning he found that his dream had come true. The money and jar were gone. Henry says each piece had a cross scratched on it.

For twenty years Mrs. Kate Troster, who lives with her daughter in Atchison, Kan., has been an invalid, unable to do any work or leave the house. About two weeks ago, however, she got up and dressed, cleaned up her room, came downstairs to breakfast, and later called on a neighbor. She has been well ever since. Mrs. Troster doesn't give Christian Science or any miracle credit for her recovery; she says it just occurred to her there was nothing the matter with her, and she got up and acted accordingly.

Relatives of Sam Bitler, serving a sentence in the Kansas State penitentiary for killing his affinity, are importuning Gov. George H. Hodges to commute his sentence. Bitler's home was at Eureka. The crime was committed southwest of Hutchinson about six years ago. Feeling ran so high that Bitler was taken to the Hutchinson jail to avoid trouble. While awaiting trial he escaped jail, but was captured within a short time. Bitler has the distinction of being the tallest man in the penitentiary, standing six feet six.

John Klink, a butcher, thinks he has a right to believe that there actually is money in cows. He bought a heifer at the stock yards in Lafayette, Ind., for \$38 and took it to a slaughter-house. After the animal had been killed a bright silver dollar was found in its stomach. The former owner made no effort to claim the money and could not explain its presence in the cow's digestive apparatus. When Klink bought the cow at the yards he remarked: "There is money in that cow; she is a good one." His prediction literally came true.

Carroll Searls had a narrow and wonderful escape from death while attempting to skate on the ice at the city reservoir, Nevada City, Cal. He tried the ice at first and decided it was strong enough to hold him. While skating it suddenly gave way and he was precipitated into the cold water. His dog saw the predicament and ran across the ice to where the hole had been broken and attempted to drag his young master to safety. It took but a short time for young Searls to find the bank, and a quick trip home in his icy clothing apparently left him without serious results.

Sydney Farrington, a wealthy rancher of San Jose, Cal., was knocked "cold" by a duck which he shot in South Bay, according to a story vouched for by other members of the Huntington Club, of which Farrington is a member. Farrington took a shot at a pair of high flying birds. With the first barrel he killed duck No. 1. He turned quickly to bang away at duck No. 2, and as he ran his eye along the gun barrel No. 1 fell squarely on the back of his neck. Farrington was "out" for several seconds. He was none the worse for the experience.

The mine boss at the Shirkie mine No. 1, at Shirkieville, Ind., suspected that the "buddy" of Henry Stedman was a woman, and he watched her handle the pick for some time. Then he told Stedman what he suspected and Stedman admitted that the "buddy" was his wife. They were trying to get a little extra money. Mrs. Stedman was ordered out of the mine, and went to her home to perform her household work. Hugh Shirkie, owner of the mine and president of the Indiana Operators' Association, says it is the first instance to his knowledge of a woman working in a mine in this State. "The woman was hard at work when discovered," said the operator, "and, of course, we couldn't permit her to continue. She was ordered to leave the mine, which she did reluctantly."

Mrs. Pearl Perrin, of Los Angeles, who denies the claims of Mrs. Richard Croker that she is the Princess Sequoyah, descendant of the highest chief of the Cherokee Indians, was a former resident of Neodesha, Kan., and she often contended while here that she was an Indian princess, and it is generally believed by her friends that she can substantiate her claims. Mrs. Perrin was formerly Miss Pearl McClelland, of Claremore, Okla., and moved to this city with her parents fifteen years ago. She eloped with and married Ed Land, of a well-known family, but was later divorced from Land and secured the custody of their one child. She afterward married Arthur Perrin, a Frisco conductor, and lived with him at Seattle, where he was killed in an engine explosion several years ago. Mrs. Perrin recently moved to Los Angeles from Seattle. She is a very attractive woman and possesses sufficient Indian features to be noticeable.

THE MOUNTAIN QUEEN

— OR —

THE FAIR BANDIT

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXVI (continued)

At that moment the huge, rusty key rattled in the lock, and the jailer whom Harvey Gorman employed to watch over the young man entered, bearing in his hands a tray upon which was placed a bountiful supply of food. In spite of his mean, stingy ways, he did not keep Handsome Harry a prisoner and starve him. He was supplied with the best of everything, and that enabled him to keep his magnificent strength.

The fellow who entered with the tray was a swarthy, low-browed looking Mexican, and as he bowed low before our hero, he said with a laugh:

"My master has sent you something to cheer your drooping spirits," and he nodded toward a small silver-mounted flask that contained a pale, clear liquor. "I know you will find it a wonderful remedy, for I have often tried it myself," chuckling at his own wit.

"Then, my good fellow, suppose you drink it yourself, for I never indulge," the young man said quietly, his eyes resting wistfully on the key that dangled from the other's belt. "It will do you more good than it would me, for I should certainly dash the stuff over the floor."

"Ah, you must not do that, for it costs my master a great deal of money to have so rare a wine sent here," was the eager answer, "and with your kind permission I will take it since you will not," and as he spoke, he seized the flask, and, raising it to his lips, drained it at a single draught.

It did not take long for the strong liquor to set his head reeling, and he suddenly grew very talkative to the one whom he was supposed to guard.

"It makes me feel so rich, this rare old wine," he said, with a silly laugh, "and how little my master thought that his servant would get it all when he poured it out for you to-night. Ha, ha, ha! but he is not one-half so wise as he believes himself to be. I wish you had taken a portion of it, for it would have cheered your heart so. You would have soon forgotten that you were a prisoner here."

"You are a jolly fellow," our hero answered, with a laugh, "and I am glad you were detailed to wait on me. I appreciate your good wishes, and I will take advantage of them like this," and as he spoke, the young man seized him, and before he could protect himself, he was bound hand and foot, while a gag was thrust into his mouth. Then the huge key was taken from his belt, and in less time than it takes me to write it, Handsome Harry, as he

was called, had slipped from the cellar, and, groping his way through long, winding corridors, at last found himself free. Free to go to the aid of the one he loved, free to seek revenge upon those who had tried to wrong him. And Harvey Gorman was outwitted once more. But where was Lorretta? Where would he find her? he asked himself, in sudden despair.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAVED!

Laughing wickedly, Silver Spur made all arrangements for the cruel ceremony which was to make Lorretta his bride to go on. Not that he feared heaven or man, or that he had any respect for the laws of either, but he knew the maiden was good and serious, and once she believed herself to be his wife, she would never dare break the tie.

"I'll tame her, the little tiger cat," he muttered, savagely. "I'll let her know who is master, and I won't be any too gentle about it, either. Blame her for the blow she gave me, but she'll have reason to remember it as long as she lives. I have never yet been conquered by a woman, and I never will! But she will be conquered by me, and she will never forget it!"

He dragged the terrified maiden forth from the tent where she was a prisoner, and in spite of her tears and prayers for mercy, forced her to stand with her hand in his before a villain who had skilfully made himself up as a clergyman. Belle Bouton, the bandit queen, now as helpless as a little child, heard her daughter's sobs of terror, but she could not go to her aid. She was frantic with rage, yet what could she do?

"Yell as loud as you like, my fair girlie," the renegade said with a laugh. "But it will do you no good, for you are in my hands and there you will stay. Your charming mother with all her power is unable to help you, and she has the pleasure of listening to the words that bind you to me forever. You are mine at last, you little spitfire, and I'll soon let you know who is master, you or I. Shut up now, or I'll throttle you!"

The last words were uttered in a savage voice, for a piercing cry burst from Lorretta's lips as she realized the horrible truth. She was being forced to wed a man she loathed, and her cries were of no avail. Ah, would

a kind and just heaven allow such an outrage to go on? Would not fate interfere and save her from such a doom?

"Shut up, you fool," he said, with an ugly scowl, as another piercing cry burst from her lips. "Shut up, or I'll kill you. It's of no use for you to yell like that, for there's not a solitary soul near to help you."

"You lie!" a voice suddenly exclaimed, and before the startled Indians and renegades could recover themselves they were surrounded by a band of determined men who were ready to risk their lives in order to punish the wretches who had long been the terror of the West. So completely were they taken by surprise that their defeat was but the work of a few moments, and the Indians who were guarding Belle Bouton forgot her and rushed to the rescue of their comrades. In less time than it takes me to write it, the fearless bandit queen rushed to her gallant band, which was headed by Border Eagle and Handsome Harry Payne. They saw her, and a shout of joy went up from them.

"Hurrah for Queen Belle!" they cried, and her heart gave a great leap of triumph. "She, the bravest, the most fearless in all the world, is with us again. Now, we can conquer, now we will triumph over all, for who could fail when she is nigh?"

Into the thickest of the fray she rushed, her eyes glowing, her nostrils dilating, and the mere sight of her familiar, well-beloved face seemed to give them new strength and courage.

In a very few moments the conflict ended in favor of our friends. The battle was short but severe, and the surviving Indians, terrified and broken at last, fled in dismay. Silver Spur caught sight of Belle Bouton, and his face grew livid.

"Blame you!" he hissed. "Blame you, but you shall never live to triumph over me! I will kill you as I would a dog or a snake! Die, you she-devil, and know that my hand sent you to your death!"

As he shrieked those words at her, he raised his rifle and fired. A cry of agony burst from the lips of the bandit queen and she sank to the ground, the life blood pouring in torrents from her breast. But Silver Spur did not live long to triumph in his cowardly work, for scarcely had the report died away when there was another sharp report, and the renegade, whose career had been one of sin and vice for years, fell at the side of his victim. Their lives had been passed together in sin and shame, and they ended together there in the silver moonlight. Side by side their souls passed into the Great Unknown, the one who had been so cruelly wronged, and the one who had wronged her so. There, before another and a higher Judge, they stood, both to answer for a wasted life.

Reader, but little more remains to be said. Belle Bouton, the bandit queen, sleeps her long, last sleep in the midst of the scenes she had lived for years; and only a few yards from her grave lies Silver Spur, the renegade.

Border Eagle wedded Star Eyes, and the fair Lorretta became the bride of Harry Payne.

Our old friend, Trapper Tim, has never yet succeeded in telling his wonderful tale about Bill Grimes, for he was always stopped by his old pard, the scout. Thus we

will leave them, happy and light-hearted, save when gentle memory turns to that lonely grave in the far West, where Belle Bouton, the bandit queen, sleeps peacefully at last.

THE END.

A NEW SERIAL BEGINS

NEXT WEEK

BE SURE TO READ

THE FATE OF PHILLIP FUNK

— OR —

LEFT IN THE LAND OF FIRE

By "Pawnee Jack"

YOU WILL LIKE THIS STORY

NEXT WEEK

FEEDING A FAMILY FOR 8 CENTS A MEAL.

A quart of coffee for 1 cent, a quart of stew for 2 cents and a loaf of bread for 3 cents. When 24 ounces of bread, a quart of hot coffee and two quarts of stew can be bought in Jersey City for 8 cents, the war on the high cost of living can be said to be well started. The Salvation Army of Jersey City, under Major Wallace Winchell, is behind the movement. Something like a dozen stores have been opened. Each of these stores is a distributing point for the food, which is prepared at the Industrial Department of the Army at No. 251 Erie street. Two big kettles, with a combined capacity of 100 gallons, have been installed with other kitchen equipment necessary. So far Major Winchell says the demand largely exceeds the supply.

The beef bones which form the basis of the stew are bought at one cent a pound. Some scraps of meat are usually attached to the bones, which are boiled in huge kettles. The marrow is extracted from them and, with the meat scraps, makes the stock for the stew. Potatoes, turnips, onions, rice and carrots are added. This is made every morning and shipped to the various stores.

Major Winchell's chief pride is in the standard five-cent bread loaves which he is selling for half that sum. "And the best part of it is that, aside from the fact that we are helping to keep from people the stigma of charity," said Major Winchell, "we make a profit of one cent on every loaf we sell."

Major Winchell explained how it is possible to supply the food at the price. "We have 300 men in our Industrial Home here. They were formerly of the down-and-out class. We have the use of the horses and wagons of the home in distributing the food. The men in the home work in the kitchen and prepare the vegetables and the bones for the stew. We buy the stuff in large quantities at almost the cost of production. We are able to sell a peck of potatoes for 14 cents and a five-cent head of cabbage for three cents. When we get through with the bones we sell them to the fertilizing plants."

ITEMS OF INTEREST

CORN OIL A BY-PRODUCT.

After determining that corn oil is an economic substitute for olive oil, Dean L. E. Sayre, of the Kansas University School of Pharmacy, is experimenting to determine whether it is a satisfactory substitute for lard. Some of the liquid oil, which is heavy and brown, has been hydrogenated. In this condition it appears white and has about the consistency of cocoa butter, and melts at the temperature of beeswax. Dean Sayre has been experimenting with corn oil for more than a year. He found that it makes a very good substitute for olive oil in salad dressings and believes that the hydrogenated oil can be used in place of lard. The patented frying mediums are hydrogenated cotton seed oil. Corn oil is extracted from the soft white center of the corn, where the life spark dwells. It is a by-product of the manufacture of starch, glucose and the better grades of corn meal.

SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND AMERICAN HORSES SOLD TO BELLIGERENTS.

Warring European nations have bought and exported more than 75,000 horses from the United States, but there is no immediate danger apparent that continued export will cause an acute shortage of horses in this country, according to G. A. Bell of the Bureau of Animal Husbandry, in the Agricultural Outlook published recently.

"We could sell two or three times the number already exported without there being any appreciable shortage of work horses," the statement adds. "The kind purchased are for the most part very mediocre animals, which would ordinarily sell for less than \$100 per head, and are a class of which we can well afford to be rid.

"The big demand for horses will probably occur after peace has been declared. At that time the countries now at war, with the exception of Russia, will no doubt be very short of horses for their agricultural and other work.

"The demands on the United States, which has one-fourth of the world's horses, will, therefore, be large and will probably continue for a number of years. This country, however, will be in a position to meet this demand."

POLO MEN GOING WEST.

Many of the leading polo men of the United States have started for the Pacific Coast, where they will take part in many of the tournaments now in progress at the Coronado Country Club. A number have brought their strings of ponies with them, and upon the conclusion of the Coronado events will move up to San Francisco for the Universal tournaments that will be held in connection with the Panama-Pacific Fair, where sixteen or more handsome cups will be offered for competition. More polo men and those interested in the sport will in all likelihood be on the coast for the next three months than have ever been gathered together in this country before.

Near the Universal field there are stabling quarters for

several hundred ponies, and with the clubhouse overlooking Golden Gate, a more attractive setting for the games could not be found. Teams are already in California from Long Island, Cooperstown, N. Y.; Chicago, Kansas City, Philadelphia, and the Hawaiian players, with some remarkably fast and clever well-bred ponies, are fast rounding into the best of form.

SOME WONDERFUL MEMORIES.

Many librarians have memories that enable them to carry in their heads long lists of titles of books, of the names of the authors, and even of the numbers of the books, to say nothing of their places on the shelves. Long practice, of course, has given them this accomplishment. In some cases it amounts to downright genius.

One of the most extraordinary instances of that ability, says the Youth's Companion, is to be found in the case of Antonio Magliabecchi, librarian of the Grand Duke Cosimo III. of Florence. It is said that if a priest wished to compose a panegyric on a saint and went to Magliabecchi the librarian would tell him all the references to the saint in literature, even to the parts of the different works wherein they were to be found. He could often quote as many as a hundred writers.

Magliabecchi could tell not only who had treated a subject fully but also who had touched on it incidentally in writing upon other subjects.

It is related that when Magliabecchi visited other libraries his memory was so remarkable that he needed to see and consult a book only once in its place to fix everything about it permanently in his mind.

One day the Grand Duke sent for the librarian to ask whether he could get for him a book that was decidedly rare.

"I am sorry, your Grace," replied Magliabecchi, "but there is only one copy in the world. That is in the library of the grand seignior at Constantinople. It is the seventh book on the second shelf on the right as you enter."

It is said that Macaulay, who had one of the most remarkable memories of which we have any information, was once caught tripping with reference to a line in "Paradise Lost." In a few days he appeared with the poem in his hand and offering it to the gentleman who had caught him, said, "I do not think that you will catch me again on this." And they did not.

An extraordinary memory was that of Dr. Addison Alexander of Princeton Theological Seminary. His memory was not only tenacious of facts but of mere words. For the amusement of young people he would sometimes say, "Now I am going to talk without thinking." He would then pour forth period after period of strange words and incongruous images, harmonious and even rhythmical in sound, but wholly destitute of sense. If that seems an easy trick, try to suspend your reason and give free rein to your fancy in periods that shall be grammatically correct and yet without meaning.

DICKERING DICK

—OR—

THE LUCKY BOY TRADER

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVI (continued)

Clara laughed some, too, but kept saying:

"Mother, I am really sorry for it. It was only last night that Dick told me he met his grandfather downtown, and that he wouldn't speak to him or even look at him."

For all that, the old lady continued to laugh and shake like a bowl of jelly.

She didn't utter a word of reproof for Dick. She thought that it was the funniest thing she had ever heard of, and it amused her all the more for its having been played on the old man.

"Mother, I'll give you ten dollars to give back to him," said Clara.

"Indeed you won't. It served him well right."

"I won't let it go that way. I will go to father myself and give him back the money."

"Don't do anything of the kind, Clara. It will make Josiah think all the more of the boy, notwithstanding the fact that he might be mad enough to use his cane on him."

"Well, I don't want him to do that."

"Neither do I, but he has been saying so many hard things about Dick and treating you and him so shabbily that I am glad of it."

"Mother, he will disinherit me, and that will cast a reflection upon me, a poor widow, as long as I live."

"I don't believe he will make a will, Clara. He will leave everything to me, and, if he does, I will see that you get half of it, and when I die you can have the rest. You are our only child. But Clara, don't you let Dick know that I have found out anything about it."

That evening, when Dick came home, his mother said to him:

"Dick Doubleday, your grandfather is going to have you arrested for swindling."

"Swindling who?" he asked.

"Why, him. You dyed the white spots on the horse, you know, and got ten dollars from him."

"Gee whilliken!" he exclaimed. "Has he found it out?"

"Yes, and he is mad enough to have you hanged."

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK CONSULTS MERCHANT BROWN.

"Mother," said Dick, after he had recovered from his fit of laughter, "that was not a swindle in law, and grandpa would no more think of having me arrested than he would to try to fly by flapping his arms. He wouldn't let it be known for all the old horse is worth. Everybody

in Danbury knows how he has been treating us. It would get in the papers and he would be laughed out of the town, notwithstanding that he has lived here all his life."

"Well, I think that you ought to send back the ten dollars to him," said his mother.

"Hanged if I do. He thinks he is a pretty smart old chap, and for years he has been saying that I am no good at all."

"Dick, he will never forgive you."

"All right, mother. I am not asking for any forgiveness at all. He has got as much as he can do to get forgiveness for himself in the next world. He has been guilty of some pretty sharp things himself. He got the best of old man Burdick some years ago, and it wasn't found out until after Burdick's death. He got a big slice of his property. It occurred years ago, but I have heard about it. People have said that I inherited my shrewdness from him," and he began laughing again.

His mother was quite angry with him.

"Well," said he, "I hope I didn't inherit all of his traits, for he has got a streak of meanness in him bigger than a fence rail."

During the next two weeks Dick made several trades that panned him out nearly as much money as the race-horse trade did.

Fair week came, and, of course, hundreds of people from out of town attended.

There were horse races every day during fair week, and outside the grounds country people and strangers were swapping horses almost every hour of the day, and the busiest among them was Dick Doubleday.

He traded for a three-year-old colt which Uncle Jack said had all the build of a racer. He had slender legs, small feet, and a chest that denoted both speed and bottom.

"You want to go out and test his speed, Dick. He is well broken to the saddle, I guess, but I don't think his owner suspected his speed."

Dick had gotten possession of him in a trade. He went out on the country road and tested his speed, and found that he could go like the wind.

He regretted that he had no one to race with him. He simply had to judge of his speed as he rode along. He managed on the fourth day of the fair week to get him entered in one of the races, and Dick was entered as his rider.

He was to run in a bunch of six other horses.

He beat the entire bunch and received tremendous applause from the crowd.

He at once, as a bluff, asked a thousand dollars for him, and other lovers of horseflesh looked over him seriously.

Dick waited for an offer but got none.

He managed to get him into another race and he again beat the bunch.

A man who had brought three fine horses to the fair asked him:

"See here, Doubleday, are you really serious in asking a thousand dollars for that colt?"

"Yes, sir. I was never more serious in my life. He has got the making of a splendid racer in him. He has had no training at all. With the right sort of training he would be worth several thousand dollars in a year or two more."

"Well," said the man, "I will give you five hundred dollars for him."

"You will have to double that," said Dick. "I am going to run him on the last day of the week, and if he beats the bunch I will ask fifteen hundred for him, and I have got money to back him that he will win."

That was a bluff that worked.

"Well, I will give you a thousand for him if you will run him on Saturday for me."

"I'll do it," said Dick, and the money was paid.

It created quite a sensation among the horsemen.

Dick rode in the races on the last day and came out ahead, to the very great satisfaction of the man to whom he had sold the horse.

He kicked himself mentally a dozen times for having parted with him, for he heard the newcomer say that he wouldn't take fifteen hundred for him.

The man with whom he had traded for the horse came to him, and asked him if it was true that he had sold him for a thousand dollars.

"Yes, and I am kicking myself for having done so, for I sold him to the man who is now saying that he would not take fifteen hundred for him."

"Well, don't you think you ought to divide with me?" he said. "That colt only cost you about eighty dollars."

"No, I don't," said Dick. "You raised the colt and never found out that he had any speed. You got every cent that you thought he was worth, and if I hadn't run up against you in a swap, you would probably have let somebody else get hold of him for less money."

It turned out that the fellow had made other swaps and got the worst of it in each trade.

On the last day Dick bought a magnificent Jersey cow for his mother.

He paid seventy-five dollars for her, which his grandfather pronounced the most foolish trade he could have made. But the cow gave five gallons of milk a day. She was really worth a hundred and fifty dollars, but her owner was obliged to sell, or else let her go toward paying a debt.

Dick was offered a hundred dollars for her a few days later.

He refused, saying:

"I made a present of it to my mother, and I don't intend to sell her for any amount."

"Dick, did a man offer you a hundred dollars for that Jersey cow?" his mother asked him.

"Yes, mother. Mr. Brown offered me that amount."

"Why in the world didn't you let her go, then? Why do you want to have a hundred dollars tied up in this cow for?"

"Mother, I wanted you to have the finest cow in the county, and I am not going to sell her. She gives the richest kind of milk, and with the other cow you can have your butter and milk. We are both fond of milk, and I have never yet had a chance to get on the outside of all I can hold. I've got the best mother in Danbury, and she's got the best cow."

"Yes," she replied, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him, "and I've got the best boy in the county, too."

"All right, mother. But you can't make grandpop think so."

"I don't know about that," she laughed. "Your grandmother thinks so anyway."

A short time after fair week a man came to Dick and said:

"I've got a piece of land just the other side of the railroad that I want to sell. I'll sell it to you cheap, Dick. I've got a mortgage of six hundred dollars on it, have had bad luck, and am not able to pay it, and the man who holds the mortgage is threatening to foreclose."

Dick knew nothing about the value of land, for he had never given a moment's thought to it.

He knew, though, that all the wealthy families in Danbury owned land, and that it gave them a financial standing in the community.

He went out with the man who owned it and looked it over.

He made up his mind to consult some business man about it, and, remembering what Merchant Brown had said to him one day, that if he ever could be of any assistance to him he should call upon him, he went to the store and waited around till he saw the merchant at leisure and then whispered:

"Mr. Brown, I would like to see you privately for a few moments."

"All right. Come back to my office," and they went back and sat down by the merchant's desk.

Dick opened with:

"Mr. Brown, I have made a little money which is lying idle there in the bank."

"Yes, I heard about it. You are undoubtedly a lucky trader, and I am glad to hear of your success. What can I do for you now?"

"Well, I have had a piece of land over on the other side of the railroad offered me. I know real estate is always a good thing to invest in, but for all that I know very little about the value of land around Danbury here."

"Whose land is it?" the merchant inquired.

"It's old Jake Baldwin's lot on the other side of the railroad."

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

"Old Zeke," a ferocious mountain lion, for years the terror of elk, deer and cattle near Estes Park, Colo., was shot and killed recently by Mark Edick and Joseph Ryan of the forest reserve, who had chased the animal for more than a week. With a pack of dogs, they trailed the lion through the hills at the rate of fifteen miles a day, and late the other afternoon brought him to bay. The animal measured nine feet from tip to tip.

The International Custom Cutters, Milwaukee, Wis., before adjourning the other day, told what man must measure if he is to be an Adonis. It was agreed that the perfect woman must measure 36 inches around the chest. These are the figures laid down for men under forty: Chest, 38; waist, 34 inches. The tailors agreed that when a man gets past forty he develops a tendency to grow heavier and usually the weight is added to the waistline. No figures were ventured on an Adonis past forty. Probably the tailors think there are none.

Reports on the forest fires in northern Idaho and Montana state that 35 per cent are caused by railroads, 26 per cent by lightning and 10 per cent by campers, the remainder being due to burning brush and miscellaneous unknown causes. There is one frequent cause of forest fires that is seldom referred to and which has not received proper attention from the authorities, and is those set maliciously and those started by men who expect to earn a few dollars by helping to fight the conflagration they are responsible for. As these latter are usually started near the railroads, these companies generally get the credit for the damage.

A shortstop named Cy Young, who was rated the third best batter in the Michigan League last season, is going to give up baseball rather than leave the town of Cadillac, Mich. Cy hit .406 last year, and led all the other shortstops in the league. At the end of the season he was sold to the Kansas City team of the American Association. A liberal contract was mailed to the youngster. Recently Dr. Sair C. Moore, president of the Cadillac Club, received a letter from Young in which Cy said: "Rather than go to Kansas City I will give up baseball." Cy is not yet twenty-one years old the natives of Cadillac predict great fame for him.

Visions of Nero regarding placidly the destruction of Rome floated through the juvenile courtroom, in Kansas City, Mo., when Melvin Thompson, fourteen years old, was answering in person to charges of cruelty, theft and vandalism. Neighbors testified that the boy sold his father's shotgun for \$2 and broke up a bicycle, the property of another boy of his own age. Melvin appeared to be really versatile, however, and the worst charge was to ... "Why, this boy even shot cats for the sport," said

a neighbor. "He caught one cat and poured turpentine over its body and then burned it to death—just for fun." "Is that so, Melvin?" Judge Porterfield asked. "I didn't burn the cat all up," the boy explained. "There was some of it left. But we did set it on fire." The boy was sentenced to serve four years in the boys' reformatory.

W. H. Chapin, convicted of larceny by bailee in Portland, Ore., for appropriating to his use \$3,500 belonging to Mrs. Marion Annie Grace, was given a full pardon by Gov. Oswald West, who executed the instrument upon receiving a bond signed by Chapin's friends guaranteeing that he would make restitution. Mrs. Grace and her husband, an aged couple, alleged that they had placed their savings in Chapin's hands for investment and that he had converted the money to his own use. Gov. West notified Chapin that if he would guarantee full restitution a pardon would be forthcoming. "It seems more important," wrote the governor, "that these old people should be provided for than that Chapin should go to the penitentiary."

A cat that cares for a brood of chickens is the property of Mrs. John P. Gordon, wife of the State auditor, Jefferson City, Mo. The cat attracted the attention of neighbors some time ago by its peculiar conduct. At first it was thought it was following the chickens around to kill one for a meal. This idea was soon dissipated when day after day the performance was repeated. Then it was observed that the cat attached itself to a brood of late "fryers," now about half grown. It watches over this bunch of chickens with apparent motherly solicitude, follows them until they go to roost for the night. Then the cat returns to the Gordon residence and conducts herself, so far as known, during the night just as any other respectable feline. This story is vouched for by all the Gordon neighbors.

A cane, a piece of thread and a bent pin, together with bread crumbs for bait, form the basis of a novel indoor sport introduced at the exclusive Hotel Green, Pasadena, Cal., by two fun-loving society girls. The goldfish in the fountain which graces the big lobby of the hotel form the prey, although to date there has been no serious casualties among the finny beauties. To sit comfortably in a big Morris chair in the lobby of a palatial hotel and at the same time enjoy all the delights dear to the followers of Izaak Walton is quite a novelty, declare the girls, who make great sport of luring the fish to near-capture. "Goldfish are fun to angle for," says Miss Marion Landers, who, with Miss Edna Walsh, introduced the odd sport. "We don't care to eat them, though, so any we catch we put back. It's great fun, don't you think?" It certainly is, declare the prominent Eastern guests, who were interested spectators to the novel fishing.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

While out hunting G. A. Probasco and F. J. Dunn, of Stockton, Kan., captured a full-grown coyote after a lively tussle. The animal was chased into a hole. They dug it out and captured it in a blanket.

While walking along the bank of White River, Ind., John Ault, park custodian, captured a blue crane. The bird measured four feet and nine inches from its feet to the tip of its beak. He brought the crane alive to Columbus, Ind., and still has it.

While cutting kindling wood west of Standish, Mich., Frank Westcott discovered a dry pine stump which he thought would make good dry kindling wood. He cut it down and a lot of fine honey rolled out of the hole made by the falling tree. Mr. Westcott went to the house, and got two tubs, a wash boiler, and several pails, and filled them with fine wild honey. After melting it and taking off the wax he found he had eighty pounds of strained honey.

One hundred and fifteen thousand bags of sugar beet seed, worth \$635,000 in gold, have been bought in Germany for American growers, that the American crop may not suffer by the war. W. L. Petriken, of Denver, representing the largest beet sugar companies, who bought the seed in Rotterdam from representatives of the German growers, called at the White House recently to thank President Wilson for the co-operation of the government through the State and Agricultural Departments.

In a most remarkable case of sleep walking, Jacob Herrington, a laborer, of Lake Odessa, Mich., arose at 2 o'clock in the morning and shoveled eight tons of coal out of a car on the siding into a bin belonging to Smith Brothers, Velté & Co. David Leak, an employee of the firm, found him the next morning and awoke him, when he relapsed into a state of physical exhaustion. Herrington had worked at the same task the day before, and it is thought that an anxiety to complete it so that he could help his brother dig a well, preyed upon his mind until it induced sleep walking.

To save the life of eight-year-old Maitland Churton, a patient at Fabiola Hospital, Oakland, Cal., eleven men have each given seven inches of skin from their arms. The cuticle has been grafted to the wounds of the lad's body, and physicians say he will recover. Young Churton was burned about the back, chest and arms while playing with matches at his home, No. 24 Sequoia street, Oakland. The boy's father, R. A. Churton, is a member of Bay View Lodge of Masons, and when his brother Masons heard of his son's peril they made inquiries, and on learning that only a skin-grafting operation could save the child's life eleven promptly volunteered to make the necessary sacrifice. Fred Wetmore, master of the lodge; E. H. Long, Percy Rankin, R. A. York and Sergeant of Police J. W. Havens each gave the amount of skin required to complete the operation. Altogether seventy-seven inches of skin have been grafted to the body of young Churton.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Mr. X.—That girl keeps fidgeting around all the time. Why doesn't she keep still? His Wife—She can't. There's a mirror on each side of her.

Ernie—Why was Mrs. Wiggs so late in attending the meeting of the Society of Universal Peace? Ida—She had a spat with her husband because he refused to mind the baby.

"I want to get copies of your paper for a week back," said an old gentleman to a new clerk in the publishing office of a newspaper. "Don't you think you'd better use a porous plaster?" suggested the clerk.

"Why do you feed every tramp who comes along? They never do any work for you." "No," said the wife, "but it is quite a satisfaction to me to see a man eat a meal, without finding fault with the cooking."

"Have you ever done anything to win the gratitude of your fellow-countrymen?" "Certainly," answered Senator Sorghum. "Nobody can ever say that I ever made a speech that it took over three minutes to read."

Jarrold—What did that diamond cost that you gave Dolly at Christmas? Harold—Well, I gave forty dollars for the stone, and ten dollars to the clerk to tell Dolly it cost two hundred dollars if she brought it back to price it.

"That was an awful mistake the surgeon made. The man he operated on didn't have what he thought he did." "Didn't have appendicitis at all, eh?" "Oh, he had appendicitis, all right, but he didn't have any money."

The Sunday-school teacher was making a review of the lessons. "Who was the wisest man, James?" "Solomon." "That's right. Now, Frank, who was the strongest man?" "Jonah." "Wrong; but what reason have you for believing Jonah was the strongest man?" "Cause the whale couldn't hold him after it got him down."

A CURIOUS CASE.

By Kit Clyde

One of the most singular cases in the whole range of criminal jurisprudence is that of the arrest, confession and execution of John Perry, his mother, and brother, in 1760, for the murder of a man who, it afterwards appeared, was not murdered at all, or even assaulted.

The circumstances of the remarkable case are as follows:

At the time above mentioned, a man, named William Harrison, was in the employ of Lady Campden, of Gloucestershire, in the capacity of steward.

He was nearly seventy years of age, had long been in her employ, and was esteemed a most competent and faithful servant.

On Thursday, the 16th day of August, he started from home, intending to walk to Charringford, a distance of only two miles, for the purpose of collecting some rents due to his mistress.

He did not return at the usual hour in the evening, and his family became alarmed.

At eight o'clock he was still absent, and a servant, named John Perry, was sent in search of him.

The family spent the night in great anxiety, as no tidings were received of either Mr. Harrison or the man Perry, and with the first dawn of day, Edward, the steward's son, started for Charringford for some tidings of his parent.

On the way he met Perry, who was returning with the report of his failure to gain any tidings of the missing man.

Now thoroughly alarmed, the two hastened to the village of Ebrington, where they learned that Mr. Harrison had been there on the previous afternoon, but had left for home.

Inquiries were made at several other places, but without discovering anything, and they finally started to return.

On the way they met a gentleman, who informed them that a hat, head-band and comb had been picked up in the highway by a woman who was then at work in his fields.

Mr. Harrison and the servant started immediately to investigate it, and the articles were recognized as having belonged to the elder Mr. Harrison.

On one of the articles were unmistakable evidences of blood, and, on going to the spot where they were picked up, they discovered evidences of a scuffle, and a trail leading into the fields, as if a body had been drawn along the ground.

At the first hedge the trail was lost, and was not again discovered. ■■■

With such evidences as they had collected they returned to Campden, and reported the tragedy.

There was, of course, great excitement, for Mr. Harrison was widely known and respected, and a large number of people soon assembled to devise means for discovering the assassin.

The servant, John Perry, who, it will be remembered,

was first sent in search of the missing man, was closely questioned, and his replies were by no means satisfactory.

He had been dispatched in search of Mr. Harrison at eight o'clock on the previous evening, and was not seen again until the next morning, when he was met by young Mr. Harrison, who was looking for them both.

The account he gave was that when his mistress sent him out in the evening he went down Campden Field towards Charringford.

It was then quite late, and he dissuaded Perry from going any further, and, being somewhat afraid, he returned.

Being ashamed to go into the house and tell his mistress or the servants of his unfaithfulness, he crawled into a hen house for his missing master.

On the way he met a man named Plasterer, from whom he learned that Mr. Harrison had called on him the previous day, and collected twenty-three pounds, since which time he had not seen him.

He also called upon William Curtis, and found that Mr. Harrison had collected the rent of Mr. Curtis.

With this information he started to return, when he met his young master, as previously related.

Reed, Plasterer and Curtis were each examined, and fully corroborated Perry's statement.

At length suspicion became so strong that Perry was brought before a magistrate and closely interrogated as to his whereabouts on that fatal night.

The justice then asked him why, after having wasted the night, he should go out to search for his missing master, without knowing whether he had returned in the meantime?

He answered that he knew he had not returned, for there was a light burning in his room, which was never to be seen there at so late an hour when he was in.

Although his answers were plausible, they were not satisfactory, and the accused was still kept in custody, and occasionally cross-examined by the officers of justice.

The gossips were busy, meanwhile, and rumors flew thick and fast.

Among other reports was one that Perry had said that he knew his master was murdered by a tinker, and another that he had confessed that he saw him killed and robbed by a gentleman's servant, and described where his body was secreted; but a careful search failed to discover it.

The clergy, the officers of justice, and many of his relatives then waited upon Perry, and earnestly exhorted him to make a full confession, suggesting a free forgiveness of heaven for a confessed fault, and likewise holding out the hope of more lenient treatment from the officers of the law.

These exhortations were not without their effect, and he sent word to the magistrate that he had concluded to make a full confession, and desired to be again examined.

He was accordingly again interrogated, and confessed that he knew that his master had been murdered, but denied having had any hand in it himself, nor could he tell who had committed the deed.

This was not satisfactory, the magistrate insisting that

if he knew his master was murdered, he must know, also, who committed the crime.

At last Perry confessed that he did know, and, on being further urged, said that the murder had been committed by his own mother and brother.

On hearing this the magistrate cautioned him to consider well what he said, as the words might cost his relatives their lives.

The prisoner responded that he had fully considered everything, and again asserted that he spoke the truth, and the truth only.

He then gave a long and circumstantial relation of the whole plot.

He said that ever since he had been in Mr. Harrison's service his mother and brother had been tempting him to steal for them, and finally desired him to inform them when his master went to collect the rents, for they could then waylay and rob him.

He said that when his mistress sent him to seek his master he met his brother at the gate. They talked for some time, when a man passed by a few rods from them and entered his master's grounds.

Supposing it to be his master, and that he had collected a large amount in rents, he advised his brother to follow and waylay him in the shadow of the thick foliage, while he himself would give him an opportunity by walking about in the adjacent fields while the deed was being committed.

After waiting a considerable time he followed his brother into the grounds, and soon found his master lying on the sward, his brother being over him, and his mother standing by.

On being asked by the magistrate if his master was then dead, he replied that he was not; that after he reached him, he heard him say:

"Ah, rogues, will you kill me?"

He further said that when he saw his dear, good master struggling in their grasp, his heart relented, and he began to beg for his life, when his brother said, "Hush, you fool!" and proceeded to strangle him.

A bag of money was then taken from his person and given to his mother, and she secreted it.

He and his brother, he said, carried the body into an adjoining field, and finally to the river, over half a mile distant.

His mother and brother then went home, while he lingered about the gate, and finally met William Reed, as before mentioned.

With the dawn of day he started to make inquiries concerning his master, carrying the hat, head-band, and comb, which he cut with his knife, and finally left on the highway, where they were found.

This confession was made with such apparent candor and profusion of detail that it was at once accepted as the true history of the foul crime.

Of course the brother and the mother were instantly arrested and charged with the deed.

They stoutly denied all knowledge of it, and when confronted by their accuser he coolly reiterated his statement, and when a small piece of cord was taken from his

brother's pocket, he instantly exclaimed that it was the cord with which his late master had been strangled.

In a few months they were brought to trial, and all pleaded not guilty.

When his former confession was read to him Perry stated that he was mad then, and knew not what he said.

Of course he was disbelieved, and all were convicted and hanged, all protesting their innocence to the last.

About five years after the execution of Perry and his supposed accomplices, William Harrison, for whose murder they had suffered, unexpectedly made his appearance in the village of Campden.

The sensation created by his advent was profound.

At first he was shunned by his late acquaintances, and even by members of his own family, as a terrible specter from the grave; but he finally persuaded them that he was a body of veritable flesh and blood, and gave the following extraordinary account of his disappearance:

He said that when he was on his return from his collecting tour he was met just at dusk by three men, whom he had never seen before, who, without a word of explanation, stopped him, threw a cloak over his head, pinioned his arms, and then carried him to Deal, a seaport some twenty miles distant, where he was kept imprisoned in a lonely house for three days, and finally sold to an Italian captain for seven pounds, kept six weeks at sea, and finally transferred to a Turkish ship, from which he was landed at Smyrna, and sold to an aged physician residing at that port.

At length his old master died, and Mr. Harrison, taking advantage of the excitement of his burial, concealed himself on board a Portuguese vessel, and was landed at Lisbon, from which point he made his way slowly to England, and to Campden.

Such was the story related by the returned steward concerning his absence.

It is hardly necessary to say that a tale so marvelous did not obtain universal credence.

Not a few people believed that for some reason unknown he desired to leave England for a time, and, to avoid scandal, had deliberately left the impression that he had been murdered.

What secret complications, what threats of exposure, or what combination of causes forced the necessity upon him, will never be known.

Fifty native Indians, after working like Trojans for several weeks, have raised the Seattle schooner, Harold Blekum, which was ashore on Karluk Spit, at the mouth of the Karluk River, Alaska, and have taken the vessel to Kodiak. They will demand salvage for their work. The Blekum was wrecked Dec. 24 in a heavy storm which swept the Western Alaska coast. Capt. Walter Tinn, master of the vessel, and all hands were saved and made their way to Uyak, Kodiak Island. The Harold Blekum was under charter to Capt. Omar J. Humphrey, the well-known Seattle shipping man. She had a general cargo, supplies and dynamite consigned to Unga.

NEWS OF THE DAY

James M. Uhlmeyer, of Lawrenceburg, Ind., aged forty-six, farmer, who weighs nearly 400 pounds, got on the roof of his two-story house to repair a chimney. After finishing the work he was attacked with nervous prostration and was unable to descend on a ladder. A number of neighbors were called to his assistance and a derrick rigged. Uhlmeyer was lowered to the ground after a rope had been fastened about him several times. He suffered severely during the lowering process and is under the care of a physician.

Labetto Schillatti, fourteen, a Caldwell, N. J., schoolboy, will be arraigned before United States Commissioner Edwin R. Semple at Newark, N. J., charged with stealing nine checks, total \$900, from a lock-box in the branch postoffice at Caldwell. It is alleged that the boy tried to cash a check drawn by Fire Chief Thomas Moran to take a chum to a moving picture show. The boy at first denied the charge, saying he found the checks in the street. Later, the police assert, he admitted having robbed the postoffice box while the clerks were engaged.

One of the attractions of Flushing, N. Y., is the fine cedar of Lebanon which was brought from the Holy Land thirty years ago by the late Samuel B. Parsons, a nurseryman. The tree stands at Chestnut street and Myrtle avenue, and on property that belongs to the estate of the late Capt. F. A. Hinman. Developments in Flushing have brought residences in close proximity to the tree, but many of those who admired it did not want to see it destroyed, and recently Mrs. Hinman announced that she would make a small park surrounding the tree and fence it in for its preservation. Park Commissioner John E. Weier, of Queens, has promised to have experts look after its welfare.

It is reported that wild animals of all kinds are fleeing from Germany and parts of Austria, frightened by cannon and rifle shots, and entering the Swiss forests and the Alps. These include wild bears, deer of several kinds, goats, etc., as well as wild fowl, and in the lower Engadine even bears have entered the Swiss Yellowstone Park. The Swiss lakes and rivers are said to be crowded with feathered tribes, but shooting is prohibited by the authorities. Birds will have a rest before continuing their southward flight to warmer climes. A large number of wild boars from the Black Forest have entered the Jura Alps across Alsace and Lorraine, passing through the fighting armies without being noticed.

Listing one's self by his boot straps seems no more important than that which happened to Fritz Recko, a farm-hand employed by Mose Harvey, of Wallula, Kan., when Recko was caught by a belt connecting a gasoline engine and a corn grinder. Recko was literally jerked out of his

boots, the footwear being found twenty feet from his body. When other farmhands reached Recko they found him unconscious, his right arm fractured and his shoulder crushed. He was suffering from a number of other bruises. Recko was attempting to put the belt on the flywheel of the engine and as he succeeded in doing this he became entangled with the belt and after being spun around with the wheel was shot into the air and thrown about forty feet.

What a flying machine can actually accomplish in the way of service when a necessity arises was demonstrated recently when the time element became important in the transmission of a long message from the United States ship Mississippi to the Navy Department during a trip from Pensacola to Hampton Roads, says Popular Mechanics. The length of the telegram, coupled with local disturbances, prevented filing it by wireless. The vessel was stopped twenty-five miles out from the Chesapeake capes and a naval flying craft shot into the air and headed for the Virginia coast. The telegram reached Washington three hours before the Mississippi arrived at Hampton Roads.

The salary list of the Giants this year will exceed \$100,000. There isn't a regular on the team who will draw less than \$3,000, while half a dozen will receive more than \$6,000. Even the Yankees will take down \$60,000 before the end of the coming season. The Dodgers' payroll will amount to \$90,000. The Phillies and Athletics will draw \$60,000. The Red Sox have tied up President Lannin to the extent of \$100,000, while the champion Braves are not far below these figures. In Chicago the White Sox will try to earn \$80,000 and the Cubs \$70,000. The Pirates will collect \$65,000, the Cincinnati Reds, \$60,000; the Browns, \$70,000; the Cardinals, \$55,000; the Detroit Tigers, \$70,000; the Washingtons, \$70,000, and the Cleveland Indians, \$50,000. This means that the players in the two major leagues will cut up more than \$1,000,000 in salaries.

Two American children are offered for sale in Detroit, Mich., because their father, who is not an American, says he cannot get a job to protect them. A sign, in big black letters, announcing the fact, was nailed to a fence near the Associated Charities Building. "We will sell Emma, aged 18 months, and Jennie, 3 years, for \$1,000 apiece," said Mrs. Andrew F. Yuhasz, mother of the children. "We paid \$2,000 down on a home, and still owe \$1,800, which we wish to pay off. My husband has been without work four months, and he said we should sell the children and pay our bills." Yuhasz has been in this country ten years. He made the latest payment on their home last December. Fear that he might lose all tempted him to offer his two children for sale.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

RABBIT HUNTING IN A BUGGY.

Stephen Osborne, seventy-eight years old, living five miles southwest of Gentry, Mo., claims to be the champion rabbit hunter of his age, at least in northwest Missouri. He has killed 500 rabbits this winter and is not through yet. Osborne does his hunting in a buggy drawn by a twenty-one-year-old horse. He is also accompanied by two dogs. The dogs scare the rabbits from their hiding places and bring the dead animals to the hunter, who does not leave his buggy. Osborne says his best day's work was forty-nine rabbits out of fifty shots.

SAVED TRAIN, THOUGH MORTALLY HURT.

Mortally wounded by a pistol shot, Kihara, a Japanese section foreman, used the last of his strength to set a torpedo on the tracks of the Salt Lake route, near Milford, Utah, to save the eastbound Pacific Limited train from possible wreck. Kihara was shot through the abdomen by Mexicans who composed his force. They fled, leaving the handcar on the rails. The wounded man tried in vain to remove the car alone and then dragged himself down the track with a torpedo, which he placed so as to check the train. The train stopped in response to the signal and brought Kihara to Milford, where he died. A posse is after his assailants.

INCREASE IN NAVAL MILITIA ENLISTMENT.

An unprecedented increase in enlistments in the Naval Militia has been reported to the Navy Department. The increase has been especially noticeable in the Great Lakes region, where the organizations are rapidly filling up, and it is believed that in the period from July 1 to Jan. 1 the strength of the Naval Militia has increased from 7,132 to over 10,000. The increase is all the more remarkable in that it comes at a period when there is generally a decrease. In former years the Naval Militia has been at its maximum strength in July, when the summer cruises took place. At the present rate of increase the strength of the militia ought to reach 15,000 by the next summer cruise. The appropriation carried by this year's naval bill for the militia has been increased \$100,000, but this will scarcely be sufficient to take care of all of the militia at the present rate of enlistment.

A SPIDER'S LONG FAST.

Major Lawrie was an officer who fought bravely in the Soudan war. One day, before the battle of Atbara, he found a spider in the ventilator of his helmet, and watched it with some interest. The spider used to come out in the evening, and, having had its supper of flies, would return to the helmet for sleep and rest. Major Lawrie allowed the spider to remain in its strange hiding-place, and even went into battle carrying his friend in his helmet. Major Lawrie escaped without a scratch; and the same good fortune attended him at Omdurman, where the spider again accompanied him. When the war was over, Major Lawrie

packed up his things to be sent home, and among them the helmet; and not till it was too late did he remember that the spider had been sent with the helmet. It must die on the road; for how could it find anything to eat in a tin-packing case? The major was sorry. He had taken a great interest in the spider, and it was sad to have condemned it to a lingering death. The first thing he did on arriving in London was to open the helmet box, expecting, of course, to find the spider dead; but not only was the spider alive and well, but it was the happy mother of two young spiders.

TOWNS SPRING UP OVERNIGHT.

The building of towns in the Oklahoma oil and gas fields has grown to be almost a specialized industry. As new pools are developed the need of new towns is felt. The first man to reach the spot drives his stakes, and in a day or a night there are stores and dwellings where there were fields and forests.

It was in this way that the new town of Villa, in southern Payne county, was built. George Ford, one of the pioneers of Guthrie, Okla., saw that the discovery of the Bartlesville sand, with its 5,000 to 10,000 barrel oil wells, would support a new town. He acquired land and entered into an agreement with thirty associates that each should erect a business building.

At the end of a few weeks Villa has more than forty buildings and a prosperous business community has been established. There are 187 pupils in its public schools. Five oil pipe lines and three gas lines pass the town. A majority of the towns of old Oklahoma were built in this manner, the country having been settled in a day, April 22, 1889.

TRAMP SAVES TRAIN.

Le Roy Perkins always hit the trail. That is, he walked the railroad ties and wherever they would lead him there he would go. He had no home, no job, nothing.

Several days ago Perkins was performing his usual feat. A tramp was his only company. He came across a broken rail a short distance from Red Oak. A big train was due in a few minutes. Perkins scratched his head and thought. It was the first bit of thinking he had done.

The tramp was dispatched to Red Oak to notify officials there. Perkins started up the track to flag the freight. He waved his coat and succeeded in causing the engineer to slow up, but not until several cars had passed over the track. But the train was going so slow the wreck was averted.

Supt. N. C. Allen, of the Creston (Iowa) division of the Burlington, heard of the incident. He immediately notified the railroad officials to provide Perkins and his companion with transportation where they cared to go. Perkins said he couldn't eat pasteboard. So he was given a new clothing outfit, entertained at a big dinner, and then provided with a job as brakeman.

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THE LITTLE RED BOTTLE.

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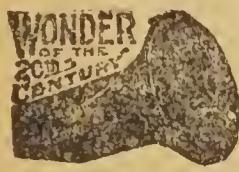
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